THE HOLY SACRIFICE OF THE MASS

Scott, Martin J., S.J.

The Holy Sacrifice of the Mass

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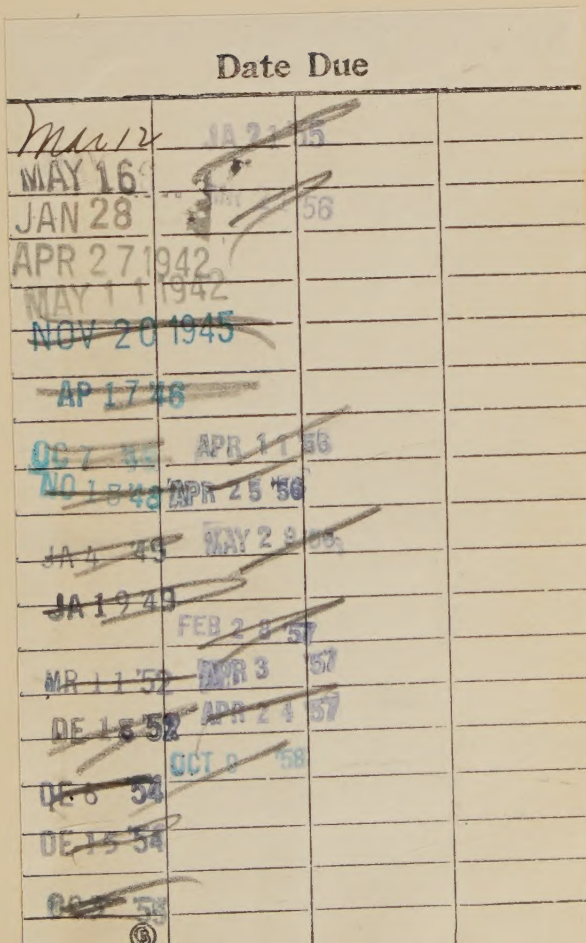

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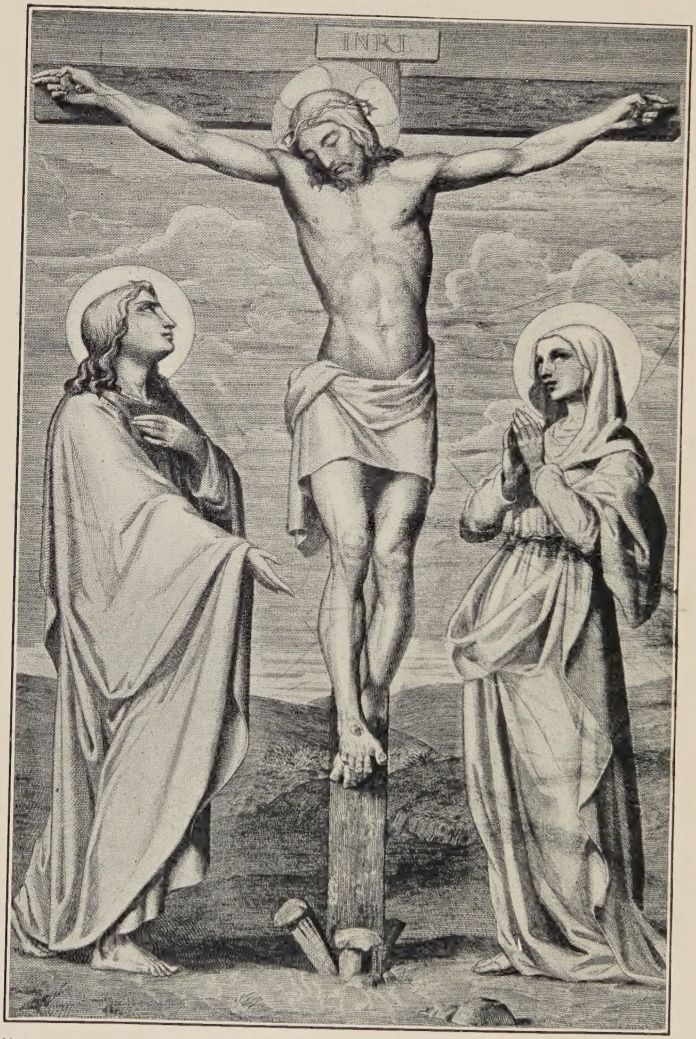

"THE SON OF MAN IS LIFTED UP ON THE CROSS, THAT WHOSOEVER BELIEVETH IN HIM MAY NOT PERISH, BUT MAY HAVE LIFE EVERLASTING."—S. JOHN III 14, 15.

E. A. Rawlinson
2-20-29

THE HOLY SACRIFICE OF THE MASS

BY

MARTIN J. SCOTT, S.J.
Author of
"THE CREDENTIALS OF CHRISTIANITY," "GOD AND MYSELF," "YOU AND YOURS," "RELIGION AND COMMON SENSE," "THINGS CATHOLICS ARE ASKED ABOUT," "THE DIVINE COUNSELLOR," "CONVENT LIFE," ETC.

WITHDRAWN

NEW YORK
P. J. KENEDY & SONS
1928

Imprimi Potest:

LAURENCE J. KELLY, S.J.

Praepositus Prov. Marylandiae Neo-Eboracensis

Nihil Obstat:

ARTHUR J. SCANLAN, S.T.D.

Censor Librorum

Imprimatur:

✠ PATRICK CARDINAL HAYES

Archbishop, New York.

New York,
August 18, 1928.

5844

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PRINTED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

WITHDRAWN

THIS VOLUME IS DEDICATED
TO THE MEMORY OF
PATRICK KIERNAN
WHOSE LIFE WAS CHARACTERIZED
BY THE SPIRIT OF SACRIFICE
AND WHOSE DEVOTION
TO FAMILY, CHURCH AND COUNTRY
ENDEARED HIM TO ALL WHO KNEW HIM
AND ESPECIALLY TO
THE AUTHOR

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LAST REQUEST OF ST. MONICA TO HER SON, ST. AUGUSTINE:

"Lay this body of mine wherever you will. Be not concerned about the place of my burial. One thing only I ask of you, that wheresoever you be, you remember my soul at God's holy altar."

(*Conf.* Bk. IX, Chap. 11.)

CARDINAL MERCIER

ON THE HOLY SACRIFICE OF THE MASS

Five days before his death, Cardinal Mercier addressed his priests as follows:

"My dear Brethren in the Priesthood:

During my hours of self-communing, the while I was seeing human hopes fade away, finding myself alone with God, my thoughts reverted to you and I lived intimately close to you, in an uninterrupted spiritual intercourse.

"It was the priesthood that I perceived in you. Deprived of the happiness to offer up the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, I associated myself all day long with the Mass which the Great High Priest, Our Lord Jesus Christ, offers up every instant, through His ministers, upon all the altars of this terrestrial globe. The Mass at these moments assumed in my eyes an exceptionally striking character of reality, because the Sacrifice of Calvary, which it commemorates,

appeared to me under a tangible aspect to which it was my privilege to unite myself more actively and directly than it was my wont before.

"I therefore said to myself that I ought to make you share in the grace the good God was conferring upon me during these, in all likelihood, the last hours of my life, by urging you always to celebrate the holy liturgy of the Mass as if you were upon Calvary, spending upon it all the fervor of faith and all the devotion you can possibly muster.

"The celebration of the Mass is the greatest act of every one of your days and it should be the holiest act of every single one of them. Verily, it behooves you to live over daily in your lives the sentiments expressed in the words of Urban VIII, of which I felt impelled by duty often to remind you:

"'If there is anything divine upon earth to be envied by the citizens of heaven, in the supposition that envy were possible to them, it is the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass.'"

FOREWORD

At present there is unusual interest in everything Catholic. People are beginning to see that the denominations which separated from Rome are gradually drifting into rationalism or indifference. On the other hand many of their members are becoming Catholics. The dignity, stability, definiteness and authority of the Catholic Church impress thinkers and practical people alike. While other religions are crumbling Catholicism stands firm as granite. It is fast approaching the time when it will be either Catholicism or neo-paganism of some kind.

Some denominations are gradually adopting Catholic practices which they heretofore condemned. They realize that the Old Church was right after all, at least in all vital matters. The Anglicans, who formerly denounced the Mass as idolatry, now celebrate what they call the Mass. The Mass is everywhere considered the

distinctive worship of Catholicism. It is the most significant rite of religion, and full of interest for those who give it attention.

In consequence of the renewed interest in the Catholic Church, we present an explanation of the Mass and the principal things relating to it. The altar, the vestments, the ornaments, the ritual, the language, the celebrant and various other subjects of interest will be treated in a way which, it is hoped, will make the Mass better understood by the general reader. St. Paul counselled the early Christians not only to practise their religion, but also to know it in such a way that they could give to others the reason for their Faith. That same counsel is appropriate particularly now, when so many non-Catholics are making inquiries about the Faith.

THE HOLY SACRIFICE OF THE MASS

THE HOLY SACRIFICE OF THE MASS

I

THE PURPOSE OF WORSHIP

The Mass is the central act of worship of the Catholic Church. It is the very heart of the religion established by Jesus Christ. The Mass was instituted by Christ Himself, at the most solemn period of His life, the eve of the Crucifixion. It was His last will and testament to mankind.

Why did Christ institute the Sacrifice of the Mass? He did so in order to enable mankind to worship God in the best possible manner. And how does the Mass enable us to worship God so worthily? In order to understand the value of the Mass as an act of worship of Almighty God, it is necessary to state the relationship that ex-

ists between God and man, and the consequences of this relationship.

A citizen shows respect towards the ruler of the nation; a soldier salutes his superior officer; a person who receives a favor displays gratitude towards his benefactor; if we offend a person we beg pardon. God is more than ruler, commander or benefactor. God drew all things out of nothing. Man would still be nothing except for the fact that God has made him by His almighty power. Creation means just that—making something out of nothing. It requires infinite power to bridge over the chasm separating something from nothing. Man, therefore, in the presence of God, is less than the lowest subject before his king or ruler. Man, a creature, owes everything to God, the Creator. It is only proper, therefore, that man should manifest in some way his obligation to his Maker.

Now this is what is meant by *worship*. It is the recognition, by some external act, of man's position with regard to God; of the creature's dependence upon the Creator; of the submission of the subject to the Ruler of mankind. In other

words, worship means the acknowledgment by man of his dependence on God and of his submission to God. The subjects of a worldly monarch acknowledge their submission by certain formalities of word and deed. The worship of God by man is primarily the acknowledgment on the part of a rational creature that the Creator is his sovereign Lord and Ruler. If this acknowledgment be made properly it gives glory to God and, moreover, helps man to do his duty by his sovereign Lord. Let us see how this is.

Since God has made all creation, He is the sovereign Lord and Master of all things created. He is the "King of kings, and Lord of lords". (I Tim. vi. 15.) All things belong to Him, being the work of His hands. He has dominion over all creatures, since but for Him they would be nothing. "The earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof: the world, and all they that dwell therein." (Ps. xxiii. 1.)

No earthly ruler is entitled to respect and submission on such good grounds as God is entitled to man's reverence and worship. "Behold the Gentiles are as a drop of a bucket, and are

counted as the smallest grain of a balance: behold the islands are as a little dust. . . . It is He that sitteth upon the globe of the earth. . . . He that stretcheth out the heavens as nothing, and spreadeth them out as a tent to dwell in. . . . who bringeth out their host by number, and calleth them all by their names; by the greatness of His might, and strength, and power." (Is. xi. 15-26.)

Reverence is natural in the contemplation of such an Almighty Being. "O Lord, great art Thou, and glorious in Thy power, and no one can overcome Thee. Let all Thy creatures serve Thee: because Thou hast spoken, and they were made: Thou didst send forth Thy Spirit, and they were created." (Jud. xvi. 16, 17.)

In comparison with the Infinite Ruler of the world consider the insignificance of man. "Man's days are as grass; as the flower of the field so shall he flourish. For the spirit shall pass in him, and he shall not be." (Ps. cii. 15, 16.) Yet man, although so little in comparison with his Maker, is the crown of visible creation, a masterpiece of God's handiwork. Man is en-

dowed with godlike qualities—free will, understanding and immortality.

All material creation in a certain sense worships the Creator by exactly and necessarily doing His will, carrying out His purpose by physical laws, serving Him as He ordained. But man serves God in accordance with his free nature, that is freely, or not at all. God could force man to worship Him, but in doing so He would be acting against the nature He has given man. God cannot contradict Himself; therefore He will not force man to respect Him, but wants man freely to respect Him. Hence, worship is man's voluntary reverence and submission to God.

Worship is shown:

By adoring God: that is, acknowledging dependence on Him and reverencing His infinite majesty;

By thanking God, the Author of all that we are and possess;

By praying to God, from whom must come all that we hope for;

By expressing sorrow to God, whom we have offended.

Worship that is worthy of the name must come from the heart. It must be the expression of man's interior sentiments or it is meaningless. But since man is not an angel, not a pure spirit, his worship must be in accordance with his nature, which is corporeal as well as spiritual.

There is a close relationship between man's mind and body. Interior sentiments show themselves by exterior signs. Joy, grief, anger and other internal sentiments manifest themselves on the countenance and sometimes in the whole person. Beating the breast, wringing the hands, tears and sighs express internal sentiments corresponding to these external actions. Hence man, in accordance with his composite nature of body and soul, owes God not only interior but also exterior worship.

Furthermore, man is not an isolated being—a separate unit of existence, but is, by nature, a social being. Wherever man exists he is found to be part of a social group. In consequence, he owes God a service which is public, since only what is public and external can manifest social

worship. Nature, therefore, dictates not only private but also public worship of God.

What nature affirms, Scripture confirms: "Come, let us praise the Lord with joy: let us joyfully sing to God our Saviour. Let us come before His presence with thanksgiving; and make joyful praise to Him with psalms. For the Lord is a great God, and a great King above all gods. For in His hands are all the ends of the earth: and the heights of the mountains are His. For the sea is His, and He made it: and His hands formed the dry land. Come, let us adore and fall down: and weep before the Lord that made us. For He is the Lord our God: and we are the people of His pasture, and the sheep of His hand." (Ps. xciv. 1-7.)

Both nature and God prescribe divine worship, that is, the acknowledgment by man of his reverence and obligations to Him who made him. How is man to perform this worship, in a way acceptable to God and helpful to himself? This brings us to the consideration of the basic element of the Mass—*sacrifice.*

Sacrifice is the supreme external expression of

divine worship. It is the highest outward manifestation of interior sentiments of adoration. This will become evident from a consideration of the nature of sacrifice. By sacrifice we mean the offering of an object to another, either by giving it, or by depriving ourselves of its use for his sake.

Sacrifice, as regards divine worship, is the external oblation to God, by an authorized minister, of a sense-perceptible object, either through its destruction or, at least, through its real transformation, in acknowledgment of God's supreme dominion.

In the Old Law, the Israelites sacrificed to the Lord what was most precious of their possessions; the finest of the flocks, the choicest of the crops, the most valuable of their ornaments. They made these sacrifices in various ways, according to the nature of the object. In sacrificing animals, they deprived themselves of them by shedding their blood as an acknowledgment that life was the gift of God, and that all living things belonged primarily to God. In sacrificing the fruits of the earth, they likewise deprived

themselves of them either by destroying them or consecrating them to the support of divine service. In sacrificing valuables, they did so by donating them to the ornamentation of the altar or temple as acknowledgment that God was the Giver of all things, and that His dominion extended to everything possessed by man. The sacrifices of the Old Law prefigured that of the Cross, in view of which they were acceptable to God.

Sacrifice is then an act of adoration by which primarily the creature proclaims his dependence on God and his submission to Him. Sacrifice, especially the Mass, has further significance and other purposes; but primarily sacrifice is an act of divine worship, by which we adore God as the Lord of creation and the Supreme Ruler of mankind.

The significance of the Mass is that it offers to Almighty God a sacrifice of infinite value, something more than all creation; for by the Mass Jesus Christ, the Eternal Son of God, is the object sacrificed, as we shall make evident in due time. And those who assist at Mass are

privileged, by Christ's last will and testament, to offer through the priest this sacrifice to God in their own behalf. This is the Sacrifice of the New Law, the Mystery of Faith, replacing the sacrifices of the Old Law which prefigured it.

Besides the primary object of divine sacrifice, which is to give glory to God by proclaiming His absolute dominion over all creation, there are other purposes associated with the offering of sacrifice to God. We owe God not only an acknowledgment of His dominion over all things, but also gratitude for His bestowal on us of life and the various things pertaining to life. Furthermore, as God is the Dispenser as well as the Creator of everything, we look to Him for what we need, for maintenance and welfare. And finally, as we—to our sorrow and shame—have returned God's benefits by offending Him, often using His gifts against Him, we need His pardon for our transgressions. Sacrifice is offered for all these ends: *adoration, thanksgiving, petition, reparation.*

Sacrifice derives its value and significance not because God is pleased with the suffering or pri-

vation which it may entail on His creatures, but because it is the medium of proclaiming by deeds the reverence and submission of the creature to the Creator. Words frequently cost little, or may be without serious intent; but deeds, particularly deeds which entail suffering or privation, declare louder than words, the sentiments of the soul.

Sacrifice is valuable in proportion to the value of what we sacrifice, and of the sentiments accompanying our oblation. This is what makes the Mass the most valuable sacrifice that can be offered to God. For in the Mass Christ offers what is of infinite value—His own life; and with the most exalted sentiments—for the glory of the Eternal Godhead, and for the salvation and welfare of mankind. When we come to the consideration of what constitutes the Sacrifice of the Mass we shall explain how it is that Christ offers Himself the same Victim on the altar as He was on the Cross, the sacrifice differing in manner only.

The sacrifices of the Old Law were prescribed by God Himself, who not only ordained

that sacrifices should be offered but also specified the object of oblation and the persons who should make it. By God's directions only members of the priesthood could offer sacrifice. This law was so sacred that not even kings could ascend the altar to sacrifice.

Since sacrifice appertains to God, it also belongs to Him to prescribe its conditions, if He so will. In the Old Law He so willed. In the New Law Christ Himself instituted the Sacrifice of the Mass as the supreme act of divine worship. Moreover, He constituted His Apostles as priests to offer this sacrifice and gave them power to ordain others for this sublime act of worship. Hence the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass can be celebrated only by those ordained for that purpose by the Church of Christ. This is why none but duly ordained priests may offer up the Infinite Sacrifice of the altar. "Neither doth any man take the honor (of priesthood) to himself, but he that is called by God, as Aaron was." (Heb. v.4.)

But although the priest is the celebrant of the Mass, he offers the Holy Sacrifice for all those

who assist at it. Christ made Himself the Victim for our sakes that we might offer Him, as He offered Himself, for atonement; and that we might present to God a worthy sacrifice. In this way the individual who is present at Mass is able to offer Almighty God the greatest act of worship that a creature may give the Creator.

Those assisting at Mass have it in their power to offer to God something of infinite value. This gives the Mass its wonderful significance. This is why the Mass is the Church's official act of worship of Almighty God. As the priest stands at the altar he is the official representative of the Church. He says Mass as the supreme public act of adoration of the Church. The priest also represents the people, offering in their name the Adorable Sacrifice.

God esteems so highly the glory which the Mass gives Him that He commands, through the Church, the public celebration of the Mass at least once a week, on Sunday; and imposes upon all the faithful the obligation of assisting at Mass on Sunday and holy days of obligation. But the Church does not confine herself to what

is of obligation in this matter. Mass is celebrated every day of the year by almost every priest throughout the entire world. These daily Masses are well attended by the faithful everywhere.

Our churches are erected as suitable enclosures for the altar, and temples of worship for the faithful. A Catholic church is not a mere meeting-house, nor a lecture hall, nor an auditorium for chanting hymns; but it is a place of sacrifice. Every altar is a Cross, and every church where the Sacrifice is offered is a Calvary. This makes a Catholic church so very much different from other temples. This accounts for the atmosphere of sacredness which characterizes even the humblest wayside chapel which houses an altar.

Having explained the nature of worship, and the relation of sacrifice to it, we shall now proceed to explain the nature of the Mass and to describe in detail the various things connected with the Holy Sacrifice of the altar—the public act of worship of Christ's Church and the sublimest act of adoration which can ascend from earth to heaven. We shall begin with the nature of the Mass.

II

THE NATURE OF THE MASS

If the Mass be not a divine oblation, it is idolatry. If the Mass be not essentially the same sacrifice as that of the Cross, Christianity is blasphemy. We know that the Mass is not idolatry and that Christianity is not blasphemy. We know that Christ at the Last Supper declared that He gave His Body and Blood as an oblation, and that this oblation was consummated the following day by the Sacrifice of Calvary.

But although we believe that the Mass is essentially the same sacrifice as that of the Cross, are we able to explain the Mass intelligently to those who differ from us? Suppose an earnest inquirer were to ask us: "How can Christ, who was sacrificed on Calvary, be sacrificed again in the Mass?" What should we say to this? St. Paul tells us that we should be able to give a reason

for our belief. Although our religion is called Our Holy Faith, it does not mean that we believe blindly. Not that we understand the mysteries of God's Revelation, but that we do know why we believe them. No matter how incomprehensible the mysteries of Faith be they have been revealed by God who is Truth itself, and they cannot be unreasonable.

It is one thing for a statement to be incomprehensible, quite another for it to be unreasonable. For instance, it is incomprehensible to us how the bread we eat becomes our flesh and blood. But we know it is so, although we do not comprehend it. We know it on evidence. We experience the change in our very bodies.

Besides accepting the incomprehensible on the evidence of our senses, we also accept it on the authority of those in whom we have faith. To the generality of mankind it is incomprehensible that the earth, which seems so stationary, is in constant motion, both rotary and through space; yet it is believed by the majority of mankind because of faith in the scientific knowledge of those who declare it. This faith is based on the

fact that astronomers are worthy of credit because they have given evidence of trustworthiness in various matters which the average person can verify.

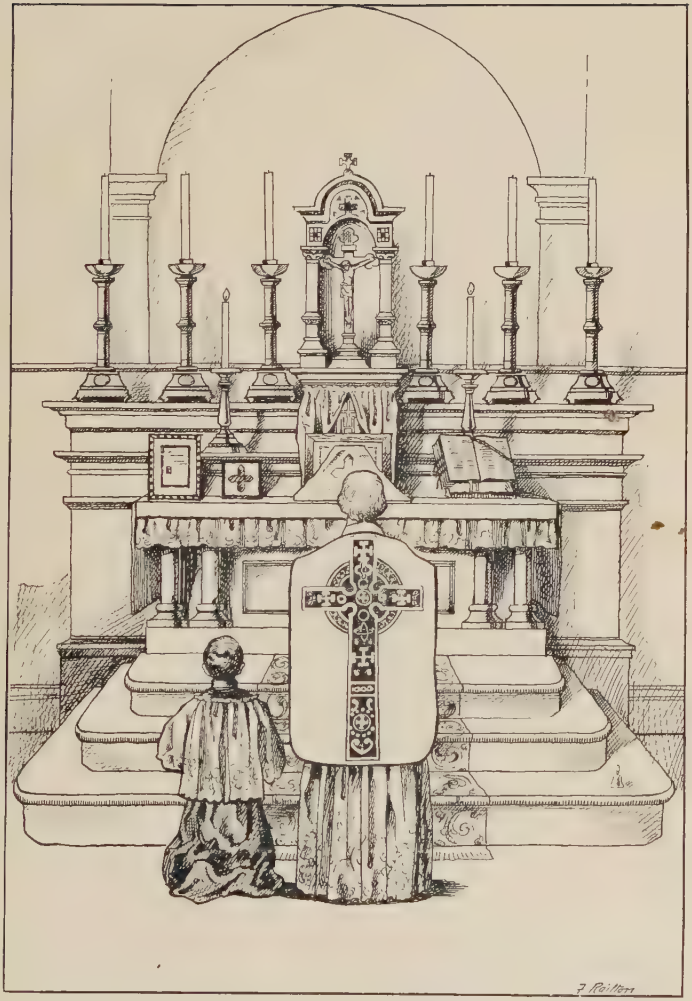
It is so with Christian faith. Christians accept the doctrine of Christ because He gave evidence that He was absolutely trustworthy. When He proclaimed that He was God He substantiated His claim by doing what God alone could do. "If you do not believe Me," He said, "at least believe the works which I do, they give testimony of Me." (Jn. v. 36.) Seekers after truth employ their reason to ascertain if Christ be God, and when they are satisfied that He is God, it is most reasonable to believe what He says, since God is Truth.

Faith is therefore not blind, but most reasonable. We do not comprehend God's works, much less should we expect to comprehend Himself. But this much we comprehend, that if He speaks He is to be believed, even if what He declares be beyond our comprehension. So at the Last Supper when Christ said: "This is My Body", we believe what He said, although we do not

comprehend how it is so. When furthermore He said: "This is My Body, which is given for you," we believe that He then made an oblation of Himself for us. He did not explain how this oblation was effected, but the next day on Calvary He completed the oblation by the Sacrifice of the Cross.

But how is the Mass the same sacrifice as that of the Cross? Before we answer this question let us reflect a little on the sacrifice offered on Calvary. On Calvary Christ was immolated. His Body was mangled and His Blood flowed freely. It is clear that the Victim of the Cross was sacrificed; but how is the Mass a sacrifice? In the Mass where is the victim, where is the oblation? Without a victim there can be no sacrifice, without a victim there can be no oblation. Christ was immolated once for all. He is now in glory. He can die no more. How then can He be sacrificed on the altar? The Mass is the renewal of the Sacrifice of Calvary; but how is the glorious, risen Christ sacrificed again?

Although the Sacrifice of the Mass is a mystery which we accept on God's word, it cannot



THE PRIEST PRAYS BEFORE ASCENDING THE ALTAR

be a contradiction, it cannot be unreasonable. We may seek, therefore, to understand how the Mass is a true sacrifice, the same as that of the Cross in everything except the manner in which it is offered.

The Mass is an action which accomplishes primarily two things, namely: it shows the death of the Lord, and offers the immolated Christ a sacrifice to the Eternal Father. St. Peter Canisius says: "The Sacrifice of the Mass, rightly understood, is both a *representation*, at once holy and living, and an *offering*, bloodless yet actual, of the passion of the Lord and of the blood-stained sacrifice which was offered for us on the Cross." (Canisius' Catechism.) Always the Mass shows the death of the Lord, and is besides an oblation—real, though bloodless—of Christ's passion and death. The Mass besides representing the Sacrifice of the Cross also offers unto God the Sacrifice of the Cross. That which the Mass represents—namely, the death of Christ—it offers as a sacrifice. The Mass, therefore, is both a representation of Christ immolated for

us on the Cross, and the oblation of the immolated Christ as a sacrifice.

The Mass as the representation of Christ's passion, and the oblation of His Body and Blood is recorded by St. Paul addressing the Corinthians: "The Lord Jesus, the same night in which He was betrayed, took bread, and giving thanks, broke, and said: Take ye, and eat: this is My Body, which shall be delivered for you: this do for the commemoration of Me. In like manner also the chalice, after He had supped, saying: This Chalice is the New Testament in My Blood: this do ye, as often as you shall drink, for the commemoration of Me. For as often as you shall eat this Bread, and drink the Chalice, you shall show the death of the Lord, until He come." (I Cor. xi. 23-26.) Christ wanted His followers to have a perpetual reminder of what He suffered for them. For this reason He commanded the apostles to do in memory of Him what they had seen Him do at the Last Supper: "Do this for the commemoration of Me."

But the passion of Christ was something more

than suffering and death. It was besides, or rather principally, a sacrifice.

Now what is a sacrifice? It is the offering of something of value by destruction or privation to another who accepts it. In the Old Testament there were various sacrifices. Whether they were possessions donated to God's service, or victims slain, always these sacrifices implied giving up something of value and their acceptance by Almighty God.

On the Cross Christ offered to His heavenly Father what was of most value to Him—namely, His life. He sacrificed His life that we might have eternal life, and the Eternal Father in accepting this sacrifice put it into the power of each one of us to become a child of God. "To as many as received Him, He gave them the power to become the sons of God." (Jn. i. 12.)

And now the question arises, how does Christ sacrifice Himself in the Mass? For we hold, that, since the Mass is essentially the same sacrifice as Calvary, Christ Himself offers Himself in the Mass an oblation to Almighty God. If the Mass is a renewal of the Crucifixion there must be a

Divine Victim and an oblation of the Victim. By the consecration at Mass we have both Victim and oblation. Let us see how this is effected.

First of all, at Mass Christ is the Sacrificing Priest. The celebrant of Mass represents Christ, and is the human instrument that Christ uses to perform the sacrifice. Christ began the sacrifice of Himself not on the Cross but at the Last Supper when He willed to be slain: "This is My Body, which is given for you. . . . This is My Blood, which shall be shed for you." (Lk. xxii. 19, 20.) The executioners at the Crucifixion were the means of effecting the sacrifice which Christ made when at the Last Supper He willed to die for us. He Himself, since He freely offered Himself to death, was the real sacrificing Priest, the executioners being the instruments or human means of carrying out the sacrifice.

It is for this reason that Christ is called by St. Paul "a high priest according to the order of Melchisedech." (Heb. v. 10.) Melchisedech sacrificed to Almighty God by the clean oblation of bread and wine. The Mass is the perpetual clean oblation, bread and wine being the species

of the sacrifice. The Psalmist, referring to the priesthood of Christ, exclaims: "Thou art a priest forever according to the order of Melchisedech." (Ps. cix. 4.) Christ, as the real sacrificing Priest in the Mass, is the Priest forever.

At Mass Christ is the One who offers the sacrifice, employing the celebrant priest as the means of accomplishing it. Hence at the consecration the priest does *not* say: "This is *the Body of Christ.*"; but, speaking for Christ, says: "This is *My* Body." By these words at the consecration of the Mass, the bread becomes the Body of Christ. Since where Christ's Body is there He is, by the first consecration Christ becomes present on the altar.

Now comes the showing of the death of Christ. On the Cross Jesus shed His Blood for us, thus giving up His life for our salvation. By the second consecration—that of the Chalice—the death of Christ is shown. For by the consecration of the wine the chalice then contains the Blood of Christ and there is mystically represented that separation of Christ's Blood from His Body which caused His death on the Cross.

It is thus that the Mass is a memorial or reminder of Christ's death—the mystical separation of Body and Blood, represented by the second consecration, showing the death of the Saviour.

But death is not necessarily a sacrifice. Not all those who die sacrifice their lives. Sacrifice of life means freely offering oneself to death, as when a soldier knowing that certain death awaits an undertaking nevertheless volunteers for it.

Christ freely offered Himself for the cruel death His enemies inflicted on Him. "I lay down My life, that I may take it up again. No man taketh it away from Me: but I lay it down of Myself." (Jn. x. 17, 18.) In the Mass Christ again freely offers Himself a victim through the priest. And how? By the very words which He employed when first offering Himself to be immolated. At the Last Supper He gave Himself a victim to be immolated, His death on the following day being the consummation of that offering. In the Mass He offers Himself again as the Victim that was immolated on Calvary—renewing the Sacrifice.

But it may be asked, how can Christ who is

now in glory be a sacrificial victim? Christ can die no more. How then can He be offered as a sacrificial victim in the Mass?

"The actual shedding of blood is not an essential part of sacrifice. The same blood, once previously offered up in sacrifice, may again be offered up to constitute a second distinct sacrifice. Thus the Jewish high priest, on the solemn festival of expiation, did not immolate a fresh victim within the Holy of Holies, but carried with him, within the veil, the blood of the victim that had been previously shed on the altar of holocausts, and offered it up a second time to accomplish atonement. This second offering constituted of itself a sacrifice, although not accompanied with the shedding of blood.

"In like manner Jesus does not die a second time on our altars, but the sacrifice which He made once for all on the Cross He continually renews upon the altar, by offering up again the Victim slain once for all on Calvary; thus constituting the Sacrifice of the Cross and that of the Mass one and the same sacrifice. The sacrifice which was first offered at the Last Supper, and

then consummated on the Cross, is perpetuated on the altars of the Church. At the Last Supper Christ offered Himself a victim to be immolated. On the Cross He was immolated. In the Mass that immolated Victim is offered again. This makes the Mass a sacrifice, because in the Mass Christ offers to Almighty God the Victim once slain, but now perpetually living and glorified. It is thus that the Mass renews the Sacrifice of the Cross."

Until the end of time the Mass will be offered as an infinite oblation to the Divine Majesty for man's salvation and sanctification. The Imitation of Christ says: "The visible priest is but the minister of Christ, using the words of Christ, by the command and institution of Christ." (Bk. iv. 5.) The Sacrifice of the Cross redeemed us. The Sacrifice of the Mass gives to succeeding generations the blessing of participating most beneficially in the Sacrifice of Calvary. The Sacrifice of the Cross was of infinite value, its effects can never be exhausted.

By the Mass the fruits of Redemption are most effectually imparted to mankind. For the Mass,

besides showing the death of the Lord, and offering up the divine Victim as a sacrifice, is also the means of uniting us intimately with Our Redeemer. When at Mass we receive Holy Communion we partake of the Eucharist, the sacrament of Christ's Body and Blood.

To sum up, therefore, let it be repeated that the same sacrifice that was offered on Calvary by the shedding of blood is offered on our altars in an unbloody manner. In everything except the manner of offering, the Mass is the same sacrifice as that of the Cross. Christ is the Lamb of God who was slain for the redemption of the world. He is the perpetual Victim, for He is the Lamb of God even in the Kingdom of Glory. As the perpetual Lamb of God He is offered daily at Mass throughout the world from the rising of the sun until its going down, thus fulfilling the prophecy of Malachias. "From the rising of the sun even to the going down, My name is great among the Gentiles, and in every place there is sacrifice, and there is offered to My name a clean oblation." (Mal. i. 11.)

The Holy Sacrifice of the Mass is the highest

act of worship that can be paid to Almighty God. It is the worship instituted by Jesus Christ Himself. It is the most sacred action that can be performed on this earth. When we assist at Mass we stand at the foot of the Cross.

III

THE ALTAR

When we speak of an altar we connote sacrifice. In the Old Law the altar was erected at first in the open, but in the confines of the temple. Always the altar was a table or elevation of some kind on which was placed the victim to be slain in sacrifice. It is because Christ offered himself a victim on Calvary that we speak of *the Altar of the Cross.*

The Christian altar is the Cross on which Christ offers Himself as truly as He did on Calvary, but in a different manner. On the Cross He offered Himself in sacrifice and was slain by the actual shedding of His Blood. "No man taketh it [My life] away from Me; but I lay it down of Myself, and I have the power to lay it down; and I have the power to take it up again." (Jn. x. 18.) Moreover the prophet Isaias declared of

Christ: "He was offered because it was His own will." (Is. liii. 7.) Since He offered Himself willingly as a sacrifice, He was both Victim and Priest. On the altar He likewise offers Himself a victim, sacrificing Himself in an unbloody manner. Let us again briefly consider how this real but unbloody sacrifice is effected.

By the words of consecration at Mass, Christ, as said previously, becomes truly present on the altar. He is there by the same almighty power which made all things out of nothing. At the Last Supper Jesus changed the bread into His Body, and said: "This is My Body, which is given for you." (Lk. xxii. 19.) He thus made Himself the Victim which was to be given or offered for mankind. He offered Himself in an unbloody manner by saying: "This is My Body, which is given for you."

And how did He give Himself for us at the Last Supper? When He said, "This is My Body." what he held in His hands was His living self, for His Body was then Himself. When Christ said, "This is My Body, which is given for you.", He made the oblation of Himself,

giving Himself up to the death He was to suffer the next day. He proceeded to show His death by the consecration of the chalice, saying: "This is My Blood of the New Testament, which shall be shed for many unto remission of sins." (Mt. xxvi. 28.) The chalice then held the Blood of Christ, the same that was to be shed on the Cross. This separate consecration of the chalice showed His death since it was the mystical separation of the Blood from the Body.

By the first consecration what was bread became Christ. The second consecration was not necessary for the Real Presence, because where His Body was, Christ was, both Body and Blood. But since Christ willed to offer Himself as a clean oblation—in an unbloody manner—He effected the immolation of Himself by mystically separating the Blood from the Body, and offering Himself an oblation to His Heavenly Father.

Christ wished the Mass to show his death. Hence St. Paul says: "For as often as you shall eat this Bread, and drink the Chalice, you shall show the death of the Lord, until He come." (I Cor. xi. 26.) This is why Christ, at Mass, mysti-

cally presents Himself a victim offered in sacrifice to the Divine Majesty. The Last Supper, therefore, was the first Mass. It was there that Christ offered Himself in an unbloody manner for our salvation. The next day on Calvary He offered Himself in a bloody manner, but not more really than at the Last Supper.

By instituting the Mass, Christ left with His Church an object of infinite value which could be offered in sacrifice to the Godhead. Christ offered Himself once for all in a bloody manner on the Cross. He leaves Himself at the disposal of His Church to be offered as a clean oblation everywhere throughout the world, and continuously, from the rising of the sun to the going down thereof.

In offering this Sacrifice the priest at the altar officiates in the name of Christ, who is not only the sacrificial victim but also the priest of the sacrifice. This is why the Psalmist says of Christ: "Thou art a priest forever according to the order of Melchisedech." (Ps. cix. 4.) Scripture tells us that Melchisedech's sacrifice to the Lord was bread and wine, foreshadowing the bread and

wine which were to be the species of the Sacrifice of the Altar.

As Christ forgives sins by the absolution which the priest pronounces in His name so does He offer Himself in sacrifice, at the altar of holy Mass, by the words which His priest pronounces at the consecration. This is what makes the Mass so sacred, and such a privilege to assist at. It constitutes the Mass the same sacrifice as that of the Cross, in everything except the manner of offering it. The Victim offered in sacrifice is the same, that is Christ; the One offering the sacrifice is the same, namely Christ. As on Calvary, Christ—by His freely offering Himself—was the real priest of the sacrifice; so at Mass Christ is the One who really makes the sacrifice, but by the ministry of the priest.

Hence the Council of Trent says that Jesus Christ left to the Church in the Eucharist a true and real sacrifice "that by means of it, that bloody sacrifice which He offered once on the Cross, may ever be represented, and its remembrance be preserved until the end of the world, and its healing power be applied and spent for

the remission of sins daily committed by us." (Ses. 22. C. 1.)

The Mass is, therefore, a real sacrifice endowed with a commemorative character. It is not a mere reminder of the Crucifixion but a living and essential renewal of the Sacrifice of the Cross. Hence St. Gregory the Great, says: "The Eucharistic Sacrifice renews mystically the death of the Only-begotten Son of God." And St. Gregory of Nazianzus, in a letter to Amphilochius, brings out this idea very strikingly: "Delay not to pray for me when by the word (of consecration) you call down the Word (the Son of God) and by an unbloody cutting you slay the Body and Blood of the Lord with the sacrificial knife of His word."

When it is said that the Mass is the showing of the death of the Lord we do not mean it in the sense that it merely recalls that event as would a painting or a crucifix; but that it is the real and objective, the living and essential renewal of the Sacrifice of Redemption accomplished on the Cross.

Having recalled what the Mass is, we shall

now consider some of the things which pertain to its celebration, beginning with the altar.

The first altar of the Mass was the table on which Christ instituted the Blessed Eucharist and offered the first Mass—the table of the Last Supper. After His resurrection Christ spent forty days with His apostles, instructing them on matters relating to the Church. It was doubtless at this time that He made known the essentials of the administration of the various sacraments and of Holy Mass. On His ascension into heaven He bade them await the coming of the Holy Ghost, who would enlighten them further, and recall to their minds all things whatsoever He had taught them. He gave them power to rule the Church, saying: "As the Father hath sent Me, I also send you." (Jn. xx. 21.) Furthermore He declared: "Whatsoever you shall bind on earth, shall be bound also in heaven." (Mt. xviii. 18.) He thus left with His Church the details of administering the sacraments which He had instituted.

The essential part of the Mass is the transubstantiation of the bread and wine into the Body and Blood of Christ and the oblation of the

divine Victim. This was Christ's institution. Everything else pertaining to this sacred rite is the creation of the Church. In the first ages of Christianity, everything concerning the religious rites was of the simplest character. Christ foretold that His Church, like the tiny mustard seed in its origin, was destined to be world-wide and to be a thing of grandeur. In the beginning, when the recollection of Calvary was fresh in the minds of the faithful, it was not necessary to have recourse to impressive ceremonies in order to produce upon the worshipers the sentiments which are proper to the august Sacrifice of the Mass. But as time went on, it became advisable to surround the central act of consecration with ceremonies calculated to inspire in the worshipers sentiments suitable to the sublime service of which they were participants.

The altar at first was just a table. But once it was used for the act of consecration it ceased to be just a table, and was set aside as something sacred. When St. Peter came to Rome one of the converts he made was the senator, Pudens. He took up his residence with this nobleman's

family and was accustomed to say Mass there. The altar or table on which he celebrated the Eucharistic Sacrifice is still preserved in the Basilica of St. John Lateran at Rome, whither Pope Sylvester I (A. D. 314) had it transferred.

In times of persecution—and the first three centuries of the Christian era were such—the faithful were obliged to worship when and where they could. This was the period of the martyrs and the catacombs. Gradually the catacombs became the safest place for Christian worship, and even the Popes were accustomed to celebrate Mass in these underground passages. The altar in such cases was the slab over the grave of a martyr. On this stone the sacred species were deposited and the sacrificial rite performed.

This explains the structure of altars later on, when the Church was free to celebrate Mass without interference. Frequently the altar assumed the shape of a coffin and often, also, it was erected over the body of a martyr. Even in the early days altars of stone were prescribed where feasible, as is evident from the decree of Pope

Evaristus I (A. D. 105). The stone altar reminds us that the Body of Christ was laid on a stone slab when placed in the sepulcher.

The strangest altar ever employed for the celebration of Mass was that used by St. Lucian of Antioch. He was in prison with other Christians awaiting death. As there was no table there he used his breast as an altar to celebrate Mass on the feast of the Epiphany, saying to the faithful present: "My breast is the altar and you who surround me are the temple."

Although the Church was obliged by tyranny to perform religious rites as best she could, and was frequently prevented from performing them at all, she nevertheless took every possible opportunity to make them as impressive as possible. When the persecutions ceased and she had freedom of worship her first thought was to have the altar worthy of its august Sacrifice, and churches befitting the sublimest act of worship among mankind.

Christ was born in a stable but did not remain there all His life. He was poor from choice in order to set us an example not to set our hearts on

the passing things of earth. But Christ is now in His glory. He won the victory over sin and death. Although He is content with an abode in the meanest forest hut, when that is the best man can do for Him, it is not proper that He should be housed meanly when His subjects can give Him a fitting dwelling place. Hence the church which houses the altar of the Real Presence, and the altar on which reposes the Son of God, can never be too magnificent or ornate.

Consequently, as soon as Christians had the opportunity, they spared neither expense nor labor to make the altar, and the temple which enclosed it, as imposing as possible. The best art and skill of Christendom were employed on the erection and embellishment of the house of God and of its sacred sanctuary. Everywhere and at all times, stately churches and exquisitely fashioned altars have testified to the desire of Christians to respect their Sacramental King and to furnish Him a throne worthy of His Majesty, as far as human hands could effect. The most precious metals and stones were dedicated to the construction of the altar and the tabernacle. Most

exquisite marble and the highest artistry embellished the Christian altar wherever the faithful were in a position to give expression to their reverence for their Sacramental Lord.

The essential element of an altar is a stone slab, resting on supports. This slab of stone or marble was prescribed, when feasible, in the very early days of Christianity. It is true that we at times see wooden altars even now, but even in these the center part of the altar table must be of stone or marble. We sometimes hear of portable altars on which priests say Mass when traveling. This portable altar is a consecrated stone which may be placed on a solid support of any material, and on which the consecrated species must repose.

The altar slab or stone is consecrated by a bishop. If you ever get close to the altar when the linen is removed you will find that on each of the four corners and in the middle of this stone crosses are cut. These five crosses represent the five wounds of Christ on the Cross. Also in the middle of the altar stone you will notice a square incision. This is called the sepulcher of the altar,

for within this cavity are deposited the relics of martyrs.

St. Ambrose, Bishop of Milan, whose eloquence and holiness led to the conversion of St. Augustine, having discovered the bodies of the martyrs Saints Gervasius and Protasius, and placed them under the altar, said in a discourse to the people: "The triumphal sacrifices are to be placed where the propitiatory Sacrifice of Christ is commemorated. Upon the altar is He that suffered for us all; beneath the altar are they who by His sufferings were redeemed. The martyrs are entitled to this resting place." By their burial under the altar is fulfilled what St. John saw in vision: "Under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the Word of God, and for the testimony which they held." (Apoc. vi. 9.)

The enclosing of the martyrs' relics in the cavity of the altar constitutes one of the chief ceremonies in the rite of the consecration of the altar stone. The relics which are deposited in this cavity must be part of the martyrs' bodies, not pieces of their clothing or other such things. Along with the relics are placed three grains of

incense, and a parchment certifying to the consecration.

The consecrated stone table, with its chamber of martyrs' relics, constitutes the essential element of an altar; everything else pertaining to the altar is incidental—that is, the size, the shape, the ornamentation. However, for saying Mass, the altar requires certain draperies and adornments such as the altar linen, crucifix, candles, etc. The description and meaning of these objects will form the matter of our next chapter.

IV

THE ADORNMENT OF THE ALTAR

The Christian altar being the most sacred thing on earth, it is fitting that it should be appropriately adorned. From the earliest times, the faithful have spared nothing that art and treasure could contribute for the embellishment of the Holy of Holies.

Besides the ornamentation, however, there are certain absolutely necessary furnishings for the altar. Among these what is of first importance is the altar linen. The table of the altar—that is the marble slab containing the relics of the martyrs—must be covered by three separate linen cloths. Underneath these, between them and the stone, is placed the cere-cloth—a waxed linen cloth to protect the upper linens from dampness or stain. The three linen coverings serve a practical and also a symbolic purpose. They are in-

tended to absorb any possible accidental spilling of the Precious Blood, and also to afford a spotless table for the performance of the Sacred Mysteries. Besides this practical purpose these cloths symbolize the linen in which the Body of Christ was wrapped when taken down from the Cross and laid in the sepulcher. For this reason and also because the Body of Christ rests on it, the altar table is sometimes called the Body of Christ. This symbolism is beautifully portrayed by the ceremony of stripping the altar of linen on Holy Thursday. After the Mass of that day the clergy go to the altar and piece by piece denude the altar of its covering, thus commemorating the stripping of Christ's garments from Him before the Crucifixion and His abandonment and desolation as He hung on the Cross. The altar is not dressed again until Holy Saturday, when it is clothed with clean white linen throughout, symbolizing the brightness and joy of the risen Lord.

Unless the front of the altar be artistically designed, a pendent cloth covers it from table to floor. This is called the antependium. Sometimes

you will see a cloth or tapestry back of the altar, between it and the wall of the sanctuary. This is called the reredos or background of the altar. It is generally ornate, and ordinarily suggests something associated with the Holy Sacrifice. Above the altar you will observe a crucifix—that is, a cross with an image of Our Saviour hanging on it. This crucifix is of strict obligation, unless a carved crucifix be part of the altar, or a notable painting of the Crucifixion be directly back of the altar.

Standing on the table of the altar, at the center and either side, may be seen the altar cards. These cards contain in large print some of the prayers of Mass which the priest says from memory. The Mass is so sacred that anything like an interruption is to be avoided; hence if the memory of the priest should slip for any reason, he may, without turning to the missal, direct his attention to the cards in front of him, which are so arranged that the one immediately before him contains the prayers to be said when he is in that place.

Mass is never said without lighted candles,

two at least. The candles are placed on the shelves of the altar to the rear and above the table. The candlesticks should be more or less of the same ornateness as the altar generally. Beeswax must constitute the material of the candles, unless for very extraordinary reasons a combination of beeswax and other material be permitted by ecclesiastical authority. The pure beeswax of the candles typifies the most chaste Body of Christ which is immolated on the altar. The light of the candles symbolizes Christ, the Light of the World. It also typifies faith, which, in the life of a Christian, should be as a lamp to guide his steps and a beacon to direct others to the truth.

Besides the candles, which are of obligation whenever Mass is said, the altar may be ornamented with images of angels and saints. The ark of the covenant which contained the manna—a figure of the Eucharist—was decorated with images of the cherubim in the attitude of adoration. How much more appropriate it is to have images of the angels and saints surrounding the tabernacle of the Living God, thus reminding us

of the reverence we owe Him. The government of a nation erects statues of her patriots and heroes in public places in order to remind the people that it is a glorious thing to serve and even to die for country. In our homes we have photographs and paintings of our ancestors or relatives in order to recall them vividly to mind. The Church likewise, by holy images and paintings, endeavors to turn our thoughts to heavenly things.

On festive occasions it is customary to decorate the altar with flowers. A saintly religious man of the Capuchin order was wont to say: "God has left us from paradise three things—the stars, the flowers and the eyes of a child." Indeed flowers are a revelation, in a certain sense, of the loveliness of the Creator. The beauty of their colors, the exquisiteness of their fragrance, the delicacy of their texture and their infinite variety, proclaim them the handiwork of a divine artist. It is fitting therefore that in the embellishment of the altar on festive occasions, flowers should be conspicuous. Moreover flowers, by reason of the sentiments they engen-

der, seem to have a language of their own. They speak to us of Him who made them, besides reminding us of spiritual things, and of the beauty of the paradise which God has prepared for those who love Him.

Finally, on the table of the altar there rests, on a stand or cushion, the missal. The missal is the mass-book. It contains the directions for each action and prayer of the Holy Sacrifice. Moreover it has a distinct Mass for every day in the year. Each day is dedicated to the commemoration of some special saint and the Mass of that day is offered to Almighty God in honor of that saint.

There is but one day of the year on which Mass is not celebrated and that is Good Friday. On that day the Church mourns her crucified Saviour, offering up, instead of the Mass, her sympathetic grief for His passion and death.

Pertaining to the Mass, but not to the altar, is the bell which is rung at the more solemn parts of the Mass—namely, the *sanctus, consecration* and *communion*—in order to rivet the attention of the congregation on the sacred nature of what

is transpiring, and also to impress the worshipers with the holiness of the mysterious action.

In connection with the altar there is also the sanctuary lamp, which must always be lighted when the Blessed Sacrament is present in the tabernacle. This lamp is kept burning out of respect for the Divine Presence, and also as an indication to the faithful that their Sacramental Lord is there to receive their homage. Everything about the altar is thus a reminder that we are on sacred ground.

The altar itself is elevated above the level of the sanctuary to remind us of Calvary, the hill on which the bloody sacrifice was offered on that Good Friday long ago. The meaning of the word *altar* is high-table-of-sacrifice, coming from the Latin *alta* which means high, and *ara* meaning table or place of sacrifice. The altar is always a raised structure resting on a platform elevated one or more steps above the adjacent floor, suggesting, as said previously, the hill of Calvary.

When the faithful assist at Mass they are standing with Mary and John and Magdalene at the foot of the Cross. The Blood of Jesus is as

truly offered at Mass as it was when He was nailed to the Cross. Only Omnipotence could devise a way of perpetuating by a clean oblation the bloody Sacrifice of Calvary. But He who made all things out of nothing; who changed water into wine, multiplied the loaves and fishes, gave sight to the blind, life to the dead and commanded the winds and the waves; He who gave color and fragrance to flowers, wings to birds, light and heat to the sun, and speech to man, He was able to perpetuate the Sacrifice of Calvary by a clean oblation. And this clean oblation is the Mass; and this clean oblation is what makes our altars holy and our churches sacred.

From the beginning the Church has associated lights with the altar, not, as some think, as a reminder of the early days of persecution when divine service had to be held in the dark chambers of the catacombs illumined only by torch or candle, although they serve as such reminder, but because there is marked harmony between light and the nature of the liturgy. Light is the symbol of holiness and truth as in contrast to the darkness of evil and error. In this and other

ways the Church has spared no pains to make the Mass express its divine significance. She has employed every aid of art and symbolism in order to impress the faithful with the deep significance of the Mystery of the Altar.

The Council of Trent says: "Since by reason of his nature man is so constituted that without exterior aid he can not easily rise to the contemplation of divine things, the Church, as a devoted Mother, has therefore introduced into her liturgy certain usages . . . which she employs by apostolic prescription and tradition, in order both to manifest thereby the majesty of the great sacrifice, as well as to animate the minds of the faithful by these visible signs of religion and piety, to the consideration of the sublime mysteries hidden within this sacrifice." (Sess. 22. C. 5.)

The purpose, therefore, of the altar with its furnishings and adornments, is not only to serve as a table of sacrifice, but also to impress the beholder with the august significance of the act of worship which is offered thereon to the Creator and Ruler of mankind.

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But besides serving as a table of sacrifice when Holy Mass is celebrated, the altar is also the dwelling place of the Eucharistic King. The altar is the abode of the Sacramental Christ. The tabernacle contains the Creator and Redeemer of the world, not only occasionally, as during the Mass after consecration, but perpetually as the Real Presence. The tabernacle is the throne whereon the Monarch of time and eternity holds continual audience with His subjects. He is there to receive their adoration, to hear their petition, to welcome their gratitude, to heal sorrowing hearts, to forgive penitent sinners, and to strengthen the weak in virtue. The Catholic Church is a holy place not only during divine service, but always, because it contains the Holy of Holies. For this reason it is never utilized for profane purposes, but always kept as a place apart, a sacred retreat from worldliness, a house of prayer and meditation and adoration.

The tabernacle is the little tent-like structure which occupies a place above the center of the altar and is used as a receptacle for the Blessed Sacrament. In earlier times the Holy Eucharist

was preserved in a separate compartment of the church, or else in a dove-shaped cabinet reposing above the altar, supported from above by a chain or cord. Afterwards the tabernacle became part of the altar as we see it now.

In the tabernacle are preserved the ciborium, which contains the small Consecrated Hosts for the communion of the faithful; the monstrance which is used in giving Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament; and the pyx, which is the small case holding the Viaticum or Communion Hosts which the priest brings to the sick or dying. The tabernacle must always be securely locked, in order to prevent possible profanation.

In front of the tabernacle there hangs a veil of rich cloth, which serves as embellishment, and also as a symbol of reverence. Ordinarily it is a white veil, but the color varies in accordance with the ritual requirements, as, for instance, during Lent it is generally purple, the color indicative of penance. On the feast day of a martyr the veil is changed to red, typifying the blood of martyrdom. If the Mass is that of a virgin or confessor the color of the veil corresponds with

that of the vestments on such occasions, which is white, suggesting the purity of these holy servants of God.

It will thus be seen that everything about the altar has a language of its own for the faithful who are rightly instructed. It speaks not only of the sacrifice of Christ but also reminds us, by the relics of the martyrs, of those who have made the supreme sacrifice for His sake. There is besides the martyrdom of blood, the less acute but more protracted martyrdom of daily life—the crucifixions of our evil inclinations so necessary for all those who would be true followers of Christ.

We all have a cross to carry in one way or another. The purpose of religion is not to take away the cross but to help us carry it meritoriously. Nothing so much helps us to tread the way of the cross to eternal life as a proper appreciation of the Mass, and frequent attendance at it. While at Mass we are in close touch with another world. As we kneel before the altar we feel ourselves in communion with the saints who have fought the battle of life and are now crowned

with eternal victory. Above all we realize that we are in the presence of Jesus Christ, our Model and Leader, who parted with His life in sacrifice in order that we might have life—real life, a share in His own everlasting life of glory. Leaving the church after attendance at Mass, we go forth into the world fortified to take up its burdens, to fight its battles, and amidst the turmoil of life to enjoy that peace which the world can neither give nor take away.

V

THE CHALICE AND ITS FURNISHINGS

The chalice of the Mass is the most sacred vessel on earth. In it the Blood of Christ abides from the consecration of the Mass to the communion. Some of the most entrancing legends of mankind circle about the holy cup which Our Blessed Saviour used at the first Mass on the day before He shed His Blood on Calvary. In legendary lore the chalice is known as the Holy Grail. Some derive this word from *san-greal* or *sang-real*, meaning blood royal. However the more scholarly derivation seems to be from the old French word *graal* which means cup or bowl. The Holy Grail, therefore, would signify the holy cup or chalice used by Our Lord for the mystery of transubstantiation at the Last Supper.

The legend has it that Joseph of Arimathea

was thrown into prison for confessing Christ. While thus confined Jesus appeared to him and presented him the chalice which He had used at the first Mass at the Last Supper. This chalice nourished Joseph in prison during the forty-two years he was in chains for Christ. On his liberation Joseph, so the legend runs, brought the chalice to Britain. When he died, the holy vessel disappeared, no one knew how nor where. It was to find this chalice that Percival, of King Arthur's Knights of the Round Table, entered upon the quest of the Holy Grail. Wagner, in his opera, "Parsifal," makes the Holy Grail the *motif* of this masterpiece. Tennyson likewise, in the "Idylls of the King," presents the Holy Grail as one of the themes of his exquisite romantic poem.

Art as well as literature has expended its best efforts on the vessel made sacred by the chalice touched by the living hands of the Redeemer. The artificer of chalices in the Middle Ages occupied a distinguished place among workers in metal. Some of the specimens which have come down to us, particularly from the Irish crafts-

men, reveal a very high degree of art in the early ages of the Church in Ireland.

All this literary and artistic interest in the chalice shows the intense appeal which the sacred cup of Christ made to the best instincts of mankind. Indeed the Mystery of the Mass is a most gripping verity. In its significance it is almost paralyzing. The very idea that the Creator of man should, as it were, be subject to man is something all but inconceivable. Unless the Mass was instituted by Christ, and His word was guarantee for the infinite abasement which the consecration connotes, the Holy Sacrifice never could have gained acceptance among mankind. Even as it is—with God's word as bond for the truth—it calls for sublime faith to believe in the Mystery of the Altar. There is but one explanation of the abasement implied in the Eucharist and that is God's love, which is greater than the humiliation involved. The Eucharist is the best proof of God's infinite power and love.

The chalice is the vessel which holds the Blood of Christ in the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. The Church prescribes that the chalice

should be of precious metal out of respect for its sublime function. It must be of gold or silver, unless for sufficient reason, and under extraordinary circumstances, an exception be granted. In point of fact, the history of the Church shows that everything most precious has, from earliest times, been dedicated to the embellishment of the chalice.

The chalice consists of four parts: the cup, stem, knob and base. Ordinarily it is about twelve inches high, all told. The purpose of the knob, which is at the middle of the stem, is to enable the priest to take a firm hold of the chalice. Every precaution is taken against possible upsetting or falling. For this reason the base or foot of the chalice is weighted to keep it from overturning in case it should be accidentally touched.

When placed on the altar, after the consecration and up to the communion, the chalice must always rest over the consecrated stone containing the relics of the martyrs. The chalice itself is consecrated by the bishop, and may not be used otherwise. In case of repairing the chalice after

wear or break, it must be consecrated anew before being used at Mass. It will be seen, therefore, that everything possible is done by the Church in order that the Precious Blood of the Victim of the Altar be treated with reverence and care. A consideration of the appurtenances of the chalice will make this still more manifest.

Next to the chalice for sacredness is the *paten*. The paten is a small round plate of metal—silver or gold—on which reposes the host that is to be consecrated, and on which after the consecration the Body of Christ rests. The paten, like the chalice, may not be used until consecrated by the bishop. Associated with the chalice and paten are the linen cloths which come in contact with these sacred vessels. These are the corporal, the purificator and the pall.

The *corporal*, as its name indicates, is the linen cloth on which the host and chalice rest during Mass. The chalice is never placed directly on the altar at consecration, but on a linen cloth placed over the stone reliquary, which stone is also covered by the usual cere-cloth and three linen cloths as previously described. The

purpose of the corporal is that the Body of Christ may rest on a spotless pallet. The corporal must always be immaculate; the least stain on it requires that it be replaced by another one. The corporal also serves to remind us of the clean linen in which the Body of Christ was wrapped when laid in the sepulcher.

The *pall* is a piece of folded linen which is placed over the top of the chalice to keep particles of dust or anything like insects from contact with the sacred contents. Every precaution is taken that there be no contamination, even accidental, of the hallowed species. The remaining linen cloth which comes in direct touch with the chalice is the *purificator*. This is a pure linen napkin used both to clean and dry the chalice after communion, and also to wipe the lips of the celebrant after he has communicated. These three cloths must be of pure linen; nothing else may touch the sacred species.

Covering the chalice as the priest carries it to the altar is the *veil*. On top of the veil is what is called the *burse*, which contains the corporal. Immediately on arriving at the altar the priest

places the chalice on the left side; removes the burse; takes out of it the corporal, placing it over the center of the altar; and then arranges the chalice, still veiled, on the corporal. The veil is removed and placed on the right side when the time comes to uncover the chalice for its reception of the wine and water which are to be changed into the Body and Blood of Christ in the mystery of transubstantiation. The veil is again placed over the chalice and paten after the communion of the celebrant. Formerly the chalice and paten were taken to and from the altar in a receptacle resembling a large wallet. Gradually this covering was replaced by a loose cloth of precious stuff, which eventually took the form of the present veil. The color of the veil must always correspond with that of the vestments worn by the priest in the celebration of the Mass.

When the chalice is dressed, as it is termed when making it ready for the Holy Sacrifice, there is placed over its orifice, or top, the purificator. On this rests the paten, over which is laid the pall. Covering chalice, purificator, paten

and pall, the veil is so arranged that it falls gracefully over the sacred vessels and linens in the form of a canopy. On top of this canopy rests the burse, which holds the corporal. The burse is a square and flat receptacle, closed on three sides, with the fourth side open in such a manner that the corporal may be easily withdrawn or inserted. The burse, like the veil, must be of the same color as the priest's vestments.

The sacred vessels and linens, therefore, of Holy Mass, are the *chalice* which holds the Precious Blood; the *paten* on which is laid the Body of Christ; the *purificator* which serves to dry the chalice and the priest's lips; the *pall* which covers the cup of the chalice; and the *corporal* on which the Body and Blood of Christ repose. The veil and burse do not pertain to the chalice linen, but only serve as coverings and ornamentation.

Nothing but most pure linen may come in contact with the Body of Christ, and nothing but precious metal with His Blood. If by exception other metal than silver or gold be permitted for the chalice, the cup must be silver or

gold or at least the inside of it gold plated. No one is allowed to touch the chalice except he be in Holy Orders. An exception is sometimes authorized, as in the case of the sacristan whose duty it is to see that the sacred vessels are kept in proper condition. Both chalice and paten are anointed with holy chrism, and are thus sacred to the service of the altar exclusively. They may never be used for ordinary purposes, and must always be kept in a secure place, and with the utmost care and cleanliness.

It will thus be seen that the Church is consistent in her belief that the Mass is a true but unbloody Crucifixion. She treats everything which relates to the Holy Sacrifice of the Altar with the same reverence as they displayed who took the Body of Christ down from the Cross.

The priest at the altar, acting as proxy for Christ Himself in offering the Divine Sacrifice, realizes his unworthiness for his sublime office which transcends that of the angels. For on the altar at Mass, Christ, the Eternal King of Glory, is presented as a sacrificial offering adequately worthy of the infinite majesty of the Godhead.

Christ thus places Himself, in a manner, at the disposal of the priest who holds Him in his hands and touches Him with his lips. Hence the reverence of the faithful for the priesthood. In honoring the priest it is not the man that the faithful respect but his holy office, for his duty it is to stand in the place of Christ and offer sacrifice for the people.

Attendance at Mass brings the faithful in close association with another world, the spiritual realm. Christ, who instituted the Mass, knew human nature and its needs for He was also the Creator. The Mass is not only a sublime act of adoration, the highest worship that can be rendered the infinite majesty of God; it is also a most efficacious means of having us realize that although we must live in this world we must not live exclusively nor mainly for it, but rather for that life beyond, which is man's true destiny.

The Mass reminds us of our place in the scheme of things, namely: that we are creatures, that we owe submission to a power above, that we are not our own masters, and that consequently we may not be a law unto ourselves. All

this is implied in the act of adoration which Holy Mass gives to God, and in which all those participate who attend this act of divine worship. It is impossible to attend Mass properly without receiving added grace and strength to live a Christian life. We need, at times, to withdraw from the material pursuits of daily activity and to give our minds to other matters besides perishable things.

The Mass proclaims eloquently the value of the soul, since it was for its redemption that Christ immolated Himself on Calvary. The Mass declares the reality of the life beyond, because Christ sacrificed His life that we might have eternal life. The Mass shows us the seriousness of sin, for it was sin that nailed the Redeemer to the Cross, and sin alone can deprive us of the fruits of Redemption. The soul; eternal life; sin! These kept in mind will keep us in the path to paradise. Proper attendance at Mass transports us to another world, and reminds us that there are other values besides those we see about us. Thus the Mass is not only an act of worship by which we adequately adore the Di-

vine Majesty, but also a most efficacious means by which we may attain that glorious destiny which God has prepared for them that love and serve Him.

VI

THE VESTMENTS OF THE MASS

For special events of life we have appropriate ceremonies and dress, which harmonize with the occasion. The garb for weddings is in decided contrast with that for funerals. The uniform of soldiers is noticeably different from that of civilians. The dress of the diplomatic corps is altogether more formal than that of a commercial group. All this is in harmony with human nature, which—being material as well as spiritual —requires the aid of external objects in order more effectually to influence the interior and spiritual faculties of man. A judge on the bench in sombre gown, represents the majesty of the law far more than would the same individual in ordinary garb and circumstances.

The Mass is the most solemn and significant function on earth. It is proper therefore that its

insignia should be in accord with its distinctive and mystical character. The senses are the eyes of the soul. Our sentiments of joy, sorrow, reverence and gratitude are occasioned and intensified by what we see and feel and hear. In the Old Law God Himself, who made man and consequently knew human nature, prescribed the vestments to be used by the priests when offering sacrifice and performing other priestly functions.

The Mass infinitely excels the sublimest sacrifices of the Old Law. Indeed they were only types and figures of the Sacrifice of the Cross. Hence the Church, guided and directed by her invisible head, Christ, prescribes special vestments for the august Sacrifice of the Mass. The purpose of these distinctive vestments is to put vividly before the faithful the spiritual significance of the Holy Sacrifice. Everything that the priest wears officially at Mass is symbolic of some feature of the passion and death of Christ.

The vestments prescribed for the priest while celebrating Mass are six: amice, alb, cincture, maniple, stole and chasuble. Each one of these

recalls some special detail of Christ's ignominious treatment immediately previous to His Crucifixion, as we shall see when we come to the description of them individually. Moreover they typify the virtues which should characterize the priest who stands at the altar in place of Christ.

In vesting for Mass the first thing which the priest puts on is the *amice*. This is a cloth of pure white linen, oblong in shape, with strings attached at both ends. In putting on this vestment the priest first lets it rest momentarily on his head, then lowers it to his neck and shoulders, where it is held in position by the strings which pass around his body. The purpose of this vesture is twofold. First it serves to prevent the other larger and more elaborate vestments from being soiled by coming in contact with the priest's person. Secondly it symbolizes the cloth which the Jews put about Christ's head and eyes when they blindfolded Him, and struck Him on the head, face and neck, saying: "Prophesy unto us, O Christ, who is he that struck thee?" (Mt. xxvi. 68.)

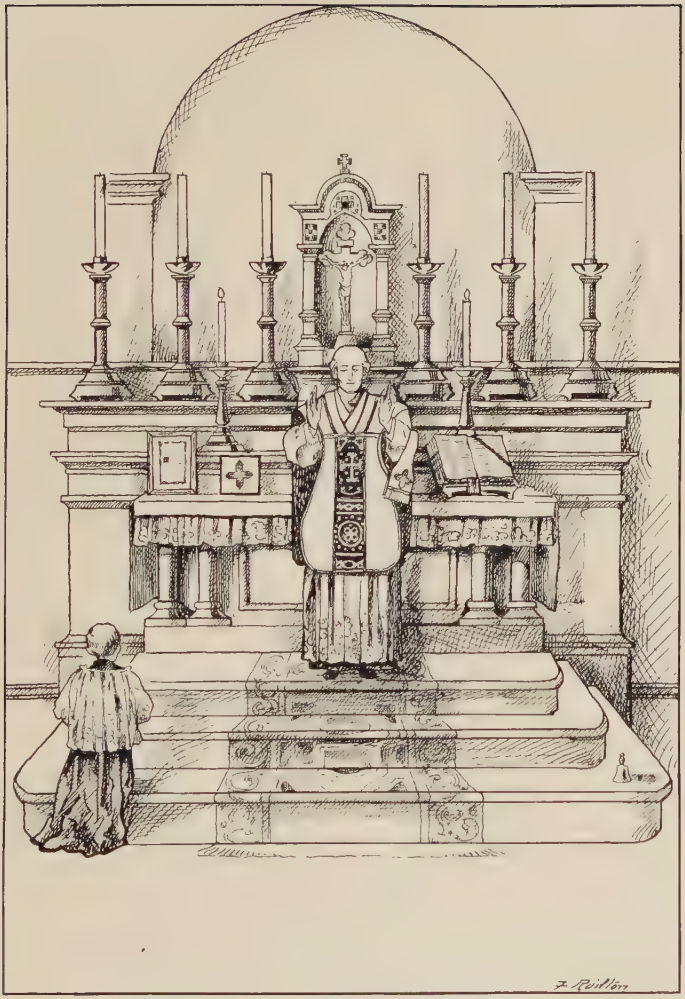
As the priest puts on the amice he prays as follows: "Place, O Lord, on my head the helmet of salvation that I may overcome the assaults of Satan." The Apostle, St. Paul, exhorts Christians to put on the helmet of salvation as a defense against the temptations of the enemy. And he explains what he means by the helmet of salvation when he writes to the Thessalonians: "Be sober, having on the breastplate of faith and charity, and for a helmet the hope of salvation." (I Thess. v. 8.)

The amice, therefore, typifies Christian hope, which is a powerful defense against the allurements of sin: "They that hope in the Lord shall renew their strength." (Isaias xl 31.) Christian hope fills the soul with confidence of persevering to the end and receiving the crown of immortal glory. It makes us bear cheerfully the vicissitudes of life, and makes us brave against all opposition: "The Lord is my light and salvation; whom shall I fear? The Lord is the protector of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?" (Ps. xxvi. 1.) The priest, by reason of his office, must live a holy life, for which he needs the

inspiring sentiment of hope. Moreover in celebrating the Mass he discharges the highest office on earth, and requires confidence in God's goodness and grace in order to enter the Holy of Holies.

When the amice is properly arranged so that no part of civilian dress may be seen about the upper part of the body, the *alb* is put on. The alb is a long, loose, white garment of linen, completely covering the body from the neck to the feet. It recalls the white garment of the fool, in which Christ was clothed by Herod as he sent Him through the streets of Jerusalem to be a laughing-stock to the multitude. It reminds the priest that he must be prepared to suffer ignominy and misunderstanding for Christ, if these should be his portion in discharging his priestly duties.

This white garment, so completely covering the body, also symbolizes the purity with which the priest should be clothed as he ascends the altar to offer in sacrifice the spotless Lamb of God. The purity which the alb typifies is expressed by the words of the prayer which the



AT THE DOMINUS VOBISCUM

priest says as he dons this vestment. "Purify me, O Lord, from all stain, and cleanse my heart, that washed in the Blood of the Lamb, I may enjoy eternal delights."

After the alb comes the *cincture,* which is a cord or girdle, employed to hold the alb in place. The cincture encircles the waist of the priest and serves to keep the alb from flowing loosely, or interfering with the priest as he walks. The cincture recalls the rope by which Christ was bound when He was led by the mob of soldiers and Jews to the court of the high priest. It also reminds us of the cord which tied His hands as He was bound to the pillar to be scourged.

The cincture symbolizes moreover the preparedness for the august ceremony at which the priest is about to officiate. Soldiers and mechanics gird themselves for action, gathering up their garments, in order to be better prepared for action. No action that man may perform requires such reverent preparation as the Sacrifice of the Mass. The priest's whole life is in a certain sense preparation for this sublime func-

tion. Man's life on earth is a warfare and the priest, in order worthily to discharge his high office, must be in constant preparedness for battle against the world, the flesh and the devil. As he girds himself with the cincture he utters this prayer: "Gird me, O Lord, with the cincture of purity, and extinguish in my loins the fires of concupiscence that the virtue of continence and chastity may abide within me."

The amice, alb and cincture are ordinarily of pure white linen. Sometimes more precious material may be used, but only in exceptional cases.

The three remaining vestments—maniple, stole and chasuble—are of various colors, according to the season of the year or the character of the Mass. Always these three must be of the same color; and the chalice-veil and burse, must correspond in color with them.

If the Mass is celebrated in commemoration of a martyr these vestments are red; for virgins and confessors the color of these vestments is white. On festive occasions of the first magnitude gold may be the color instead of that ordinarily prescribed. Black vestments are used in

requiem Masses; purple during Lent, except on feast days; green on Sunday, unless it be a particular feast. The red for martyrs symbolizes the blood they shed; the white for virgins and confessors typifies their sanctity; the black for requiems signifies mourning; the purple in Lent indicates penance; and the green on Sunday typifies Christian hope. So much for the color of maniple, stole and chasuble.

With regard to the material of these vestments it is ordinarily of precious cloth, either silk, velvet, cloth-of-gold or any other substantial texture. These vestments are intended to be appropriate to the dignity of the function which they serve. Consequently they may be as rich as the piety and generosity of the faithful may desire.

The *maniple* is a small looped vestment into which the priest inserts his left arm. It rests between the wrist and the elbow, secured by a pin or other fastener, and hangs suspended from the arm. In putting on the maniple the priest prays: "May I be worthy to bear the maniple of weeping and sorrow, that with exultation I may receive the reward of labor." The maniple re-

minds the priest, that the follower and minister of Christ, must be prepared to share the labors and sufferings of Christ. The maniple symbolizes the rope which tied the hands of Our Lord as He stood an object of pity and scorn before Pilate who pointing to Him said: *"Ecce Homo!"* The maniple thus signifies that if we would be crowned with Our Saviour we must also be willing to endure the hardships which His service may entail.

After adjusting the maniple the priest next vests himself with the *stole*. The stole is a long band of cloth from four to six inches wide with a cross embroidered at both ends and in the middle. It hangs from the shoulders of the priest, and is crossed over his breast and held in position by the cincture.

The stole signifies the cross which Jesus carried on His shoulders on His way to crucifixion. It typifies the yoke of the Lord which the priest as the minister of the Crucified must be prepared to carry. At ordination the bishop, in placing the stole on the priest, says: "Take upon you the yoke of the Lord; for His yoke is sweet and

His burden light." It is sweet because love makes it so, and light because Christ helps carry it. When vesting for Mass the priest prays as he puts on the stole: "Give me anew, O Lord, the robe of immortality, which I have lost through the defection of our first parents, and although I am unworthy to approach the Holy Mysteries, may I nevertheless merit eternal joy."

Among the ancients the stole was a mark of honor. As a sacred vestment it denotes the holy office of priesthood and is worn by the priest whenever he officiates at Mass. It is also prescribed for Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament and for the administration of the various sacraments. It is the distinctive insignia of the priest in the performance of priestly duties, being a symbol of the blessed and honorable and laborious ministry of the altar.

We now come to the last but principal vestment of the Mass, the *chasuble*. In earlier times this was a garment which completely covered the person of the priest. For reasons of convenience this enveloping robe gave way to the present vestment which we see covering the back

and front of the priest at Mass, but open on both sides, to give ease of movement to him as he performs the various manual actions of the Mass. The chasuble is the large outer vestment of the priest at Mass. It rests on the shoulders and hangs gracefully over his person and down about to the knees.

The chasuble reminds us of the purple robe of mockery in which the executioners enveloped Christ, as they bowed down before Him in feigned reverence, His head crowned with thorns, and a mock scepter in His hands. The chasuble symbolizes also the eternal kingship of Christ who said of Himself "Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and so to enter into His glory?" (Lk. xxiv. 26.) It is because Christ is the Eternal King of Glory that the Church employs everything at her command to honor Him. This is why no material is too precious and no ceremony too grand in celebrating the Sacred Mysteries of the Altar.

Christ became a victim in our stead, offering Himself as propitiation for our sins. He took upon Himself the iniquity of us all and expiated

our guilt by His innocent death. For our sakes He became, as it were, a worm and no man, an outcast, reputed with the wicked. But precisely because He so humiliated Himself we should on our part strive to glorify Him. And this is why the Church has such splendor of ritual and grandeur of ceremony. This is why the vestments of Mass on festive occasions are so rich.

Besides its other meanings the chasuble also symbolizes the love which animated Jesus in becoming our Redeemer, and the love for Him which should characterize the faithful in return. In no better way can we return God's love than by offering the Sacrifice of the Mass in the right spirit. By the Mass, God places in our hands a gift which is worthy of His divine acceptance, and which it is in our power frequently to give Him. The love of God is the whole law; for if we love God we shall love our neighbor for His sake, since He commands it. If we love our neighbor we shall do right by him, we shall be fulfilling the golden rule, we shall be living as God ordains, and in the end we shall receive of the Lord the reward of eternal inheritance.

The vestments of Mass speak eloquently of Christ's love and of the love we owe Him in return—not the barren love of words but the fruitful love of deeds. By deeds He manifested His love for us; by deeds we should prove our love for Him. The Holy Mass, above everything else, will give us the grace to love God in very deed. In particular it gives us the means of offering to Our Sovereign Lord worship truly worthy of Him; adoration most acceptable to Him; atonement for our delinquencies in His service; and an oblation most efficacious to obtain what is really needful for our true welfare.

VII

LIGHTS AND LANGUAGE

Before the priest goes to the altar to begin Mass, at least two candles must be lighted. These candles must be of beeswax, or composed mainly of beeswax. They are lighted in order to symbolize Christ as the Light of the World. They must be of beeswax because they represent the Body of Christ formed from the most pure body of the Virgin Mary, just as beeswax is the product of exquisite blossoms and flowers. The lighted candle is a mystical representation of Christ Himself, who so burned with love for us that His life was consumed on the Cross. In the lighted candle the flame symbolizes the divinity of Christ, the candle His humanity.

Light is the symbol of truth and of life. In the prayer for the faithful departed we implore God to "let perpetual light shine upon them." Light stands for truth, as darkness does for er-

ror. Satan is called the prince of darkness, while Christ proclaimed Himself to be the Light of the World. It is appropriate, therefore, that light should be one of the accessories of the Mass.

The candles, although they may serve at times a practical purpose, are mainly employed in a mystical sense. Lights, incense, flowers, etc., are the natural language of mystical expression. And this pertains to civilian as well as religious ceremonies. Lights and flowers at weddings have a meaning all their own. In governmental and social ceremonies music plays an important part, adding dignity and joy to the function. A monarch is saluted by the discharge of cannon, a very punctilious code specifying the number and degree of the discharges. And so with the Mass, a specified number of candles is prescribed according to the character of the Mass, whether it be low or high.

Just as Christ is both God and man, so has His Church the twofold element of the human and the divine. The Church is divine in her Founder, in grace-giving sacraments, in her in-

fallible teaching, and in her guarantee of perpetuity. She is human inasmuch as she employs human and not divine ministers, uses human means in carrying on her work, and is composed of members who are human and subject to the frailties of human nature. Consequently her ritual makes an appeal to the faithful by the use of everything that nobly influences humanity. Hence her altar during Mass conveys a silent message to the devout worshiper. Candles, flowers, bell, incense, vestments, and sacred images, all speak their own language to those who kneel in adoration in presence of the Sacred Mysteries which are being enacted.

And so the lights on the altar have their significance. Besides serving as a mark of honor, and symbolizing Christ, the Light of the World, they also typify the ardor of faith which should animate the Christian, a faith so ardent that it should make him a light unto others, and if need be consume him in upholding and extending the truth. As the candles on the altar are gradually consumed by the flame which feeds on them, so should the Christian be prepared to lose even

life itself, for His sake who gave His life that we might live forever. Beautifully, therefore, do the burning candles symbolize the Mystery of the Altar, which represents to us the death of the Saviour, which He Himself commanded His Church to solemnize in commemoration of His sacrifice: "Do this for a commemoration of Me." (Lk. xxii. 19.)

The Apostle, St. Paul, writing to the Corinthians, reminds them that the Mass is a living memorial of the death of Christ: "As often as you shall eat this Bread, and drink the Chalice, you shall show the death of the Lord, until He come." (I Cor. xi. 26.) The flaming candles, gradually burning themselves out, recall the dying Christ, whose burning love for us caused Him to expire on the Cross.

The candles therefore speak of Christ, the Light of the World, and also of the love of Christ, consuming Him for our sake. Not that the candles may not have other associations, but primarily they serve as a mark of respect to Christ and to recall His love, and the splendor of truth.

The ring which is placed on the bride's finger at marriage recalls the troth she has pledged to her spouse. It may also recall some event, tragic or otherwise, which happened at the moment when the ceremony occurred.

In like manner the candles may recall to the faithful those early days of Christian persecution, when Mass had to be celebrated in the catacombs or other dark places, out of sight of the enemies of the Cross. Those were the days when to be a Christian put one in fair way to becoming a martyr or an exile or a prisoner in chains. Thus the candles read us a lesson in Christian fortitude, and tell us that if in our day we must make sacrifices for the Faith, it is a glorious thing to suffer under the banner of the King of time and eternity, "who is clothed with light as with a garment" (Ps. ciii. 2.) and "who dwelleth in light inaccessible." (I Tim. vi. 16.)

With the candles lighted, and the wine and water placed on the little table on the epistle side of the altar, and the missal and altar cards in their place, everything is prepared for the vested priest to begin Mass. Before we describe

in detail this most sacred act of worship, we shall explain why the language of the holy sacrifice is Latin.

At the outset we must understand that the language used at Mass is not an essential part of this act of worship. The essential part of Mass is the transubstantiation of bread and wine into the Body and Blood of Christ, whereby Our Saviour, the same Victim as on Calvary, is offered anew for the sins of mankind and for the other ends of the sacrifice. This must be clearly understood, that the Mass is not essentially a prayer nor a series of prayers but a sacrificial act. Prayers and other rites lead up to and follow the central act of the Mass. Everything at Mass, except the act of sacrifice, was prescribed by the Church.

Christ left with His Church the power to regulate the administration of the sacraments and the Mass which He instituted. It rests with her therefore to formulate the ritual of these sacred institutions. Hence at various times she has decreed the particular manner in which the various sacraments should be administered. At

one time the Blessed Eucharist was received by the faithful under the appearance of both bread and wine. The Church for good reasons modified that ritual. Marriage, which was made a sacrament by Christ, has been contracted under various forms, according to the wisdom and prudence of the Church, which legislates for the welfare of her children according to times and circumstances. The nature of the sacraments may not be altered in any way, but the manner of administering them depends upon the Church, of which Christ said: "As the Father hath sent Me, I also send you." (Jn. xx. 21.); and again, "He who heareth you, heareth Me." (Lk. x. 16.)

With regard to the Mass, the nature of the sacrifice can not be changed, but the manner of celebrating its accidental parts depends upon the Church, God's representative on earth. The lights and decorations and prayers and language are accidental features of the great sacrificial act, and may be amplified or altered as the Church, divinely guided, deems proper.

The Mass in its essence is unchangeable and mysterious. It is fitting, therefore, that a lan-

guage which is unchangeable and mysterious should be employed in its celebration. Latin as a dead language is fixed; and as a language which is not generally spoken, is more or less mysterious. The Mass would be the Mass without any words at all, except those spoken by Our Lord at the first Mass, on the eve of the Crucifixion. All the words uttered by the celebrant of the Mass, outside those of the consecration, are accessories to the great central act of sacrifice, and may be altered or deleted by the Church as she sees fit. Hence the language of the Mass may be whatever the Church prescribes.

In the days of the apostles the Mass was said in the Hebrew language of that time (Aramaic), Greek and Latin—the three languages in which was written the inscription on the Cross: "Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews." Greek was then the dominant language of the Roman world, and was employed during the first two centuries by the Roman Christians, and also at Alexandria, Antioch and Jerusalem. The New Testament, except the Gospel of St. Matthew,

was originally written in Greek. Greek was the language of the Septuagint translation of the Old Testament, then in universal use among the Jews outside Palestine.

From the third century on, however, Latin became the usual language spoken by the Christians at Rome. And since it was from Rome as a center that missionaries carried the Faith to most of the nations of Europe, it gradually came about that the official and liturgical language of Christianity in the western Roman empire was Latin. Moreover Latin was the spoken language of the western Roman empire. All legal and governmental business was transacted in the language of the conquerors. The result was that Latin gradually replaced the native languages of what are now the countries of most of modern Europe.

With the breaking up of the Roman empire the various peoples which had been subject to Rome drifted away from the influence of their imperial masters and formed distinctive nations. France, Spain, Portugal, Britain and other countries by degrees assumed sovereignty. Being

far removed from the center of Latinity these nations, as time went on, spoke Latin of an inferior kind which eventually developed, by local conditions, into the modern languages of Europe: French, Spanish, English, etc. Italy, being closest to the fountain-head of Latinity, retained a closer resemblance to the classic tongue than any other nation, as we may readily see by comparison of Italian with Latin.

During this long period of transition, when language was continually changing, the Church, whose doctrine and ritual were very exact found it advisable, if not necessary, in order to preserve the Faith and liturgy in their integrity, to retain Latin as the language of her ritual. When, finally, modern nations became more or less stabilized, the Church's liturgy was seen to be the same throughout the various divergent nations of the former Roman world from Italy to Britain.

By that time Latin had ceased to be a spoken language, even in Italy. It had become what is called a dead language—that is, one which exists no longer except in the literature of the dead

past. It was no longer subject to change, it was fixed forever. Moreover on account of its being unknown, except to scholars, it had about it a certain mysteriousness which is always associated with the unknown. Hence for the exact and mystic character of the Mass it was an admirable medium.

Spoken languages are continually changing. The English spoken in Shakespeare's day would hardly be understood by us of the present day. A Church which exists throughout the world cannot be at the mercy of the fluctuations of various languages. Her rites and liturgy are too sacred to be misrepresented by a multitude of translations. The Latin language admits of no variation. It is everywhere and always the same. It is thus admirably adapted to preserve the Church's liturgy changeless amidst a changeable and changing world.

Of course the only unchangeable thing about the Catholic Church is her teachings and the nature of her sacramental deposit. The liturgy may be changed at her discretion; but her glory has been her fidelity to ancient forms. These

she does not alter except for extraordinary reasons.

Latin, on account of its antiquity, is wonderfully in harmony with the venerable character of the Mass. Moreover, on account of its terseness and precision it is marvelously adapted to the sacred and mystic nature of the Holy Sacrifice. The Church could change the language of the Mass tomorrow, if she wishes, without affecting the essential nature of the Mass. But the Universal Church regards it as providential that her great act of worship is performed in almost every part of the world in the same language. In China and India and Australia and Africa and Europe and Labrador and Brazil, wherever the Catholic priest says Mass according to the Roman rite, it is said in Latin.

For reasons of venerable tradition the Catholic Church allows Mass to be celebrated in other languages of antiquity by those nations which from almost apostolic times celebrated the Mass in their own tongue. Hence you hear of the Greek and Syriac and Armenian rites. But when Mass is said in these different lan-

guages it is not the modern language which is used but the ancient, which is as different from the present spoken language of those people as Latin is from Italian. The variety of language is not permitted to those nations in order that Mass may be said in the language of the people but out of regard for the antiquity of their rites.

The Mass, as said before, is not a form of prayer but a sacrificial act. Prayers abound in the Mass—the most efficacious prayers—but they are only adjuncts to the supreme act of adoration which the Holy Sacrifice gives God.

There are those who object to Latin in the Mass for the reason that they do not understand Latin. But God, to whom the sacrifice is offered, and the priest who officiates, understand the language of the sacrifice. That is all that is necessary. The faithful who assist at Mass understand that an act of infinite adoration is being paid to God, and that they by their presence participate in it. Moreover by means of their prayer-books they know everything that is said and done at the altar.

Suppose the Mass were in English, for in-

stance, how many of the people would be able to follow the priest? Only the few who were close to the altar. Let it be repeated, the Mass is not a series of prayers, but a sublime act of adoration, and all they who are present in the right spirit, share in offering it to Almighty God.

When fifty thousand people attended the inauguration of the President of the United States, only those in close proximity to the participants heard the oath of office before the invention of radio amplifiers. But all of them by their presence lent solemnity to the ceremony. When people attend an opera in German or Italian how many of them know the language of the performance? And even if they did know it, how many of the singers' words would they distinguish?

People appreciate an inauguration because they know the nature of what is going on. They appreciate an opera because, although not understanding the language, the performance speaks for itself, especially with the aid of a libretto. And so with the Mass; Catholics know

what the Mass signifies, and moreover the Mass speaks for itself by its ceremonies and symbolisms. Besides by means of prayer-books the people can follow in detail every action and word of the priest.

Certain Protestant sects have recently adopted what they term a Mass. They saw the need of something more than hymns and addresses in order to maintain divine worship. They celebrate what they call the Mass, in English.

The Mass is primarily directed to Almighty God. What constitutes its merit in His sight is the infinite value of what is offered—namely, Jesus Christ, the divine Victim. The Church employs Latin in this august Sacrifice because by its dignity, and preciseness, and fixity, and mysteriousness it is the most appropriate language for the most dignified and precise and permanent and significant act of worship which the creature can offer to the Creator.

VIII

THE PRELUDE OF THE MASS

The Mass proper, as said heretofore, consists of the sacrificial act at the consecration. Leading up to this central and essential feature of this act of divine worship there are various prayers and procedures. In order that we may have a right appreciation of the Sacrifice of the Altar it is desirable to know what the Church signifies by the different prayers and actions which accompany it.

Let us begin with the meaning of the word *mass*. The Latin word for mass is *missa*. This word is derived from the phrase which is pronounced by the priest just before the last blessing, at the conclusion of the Holy Sacrifice. Turning towards the congregation the celebrant says "*Ite, missa est.*" which means, literally, "Depart; it is the dismissal." Broadly, the

phrase means, "Depart; the sacrifice is finished." This recalls the words of the dying Christ on the Cross: "*Consummatum est.*"—"the sacrifice is consummated, or finished." The Mass therefore means the Sacrifice of Calvary.

Probably the first Mass, after that instituted by Christ, was celebrated by St. Peter on the day of Pentecost. It was a simple ceremony, a duplication of what Christ had done at the Last Supper. In Scripture the Mass is variously named. The Acts of the Apostles frequently mentions it as "The Breaking of Bread." (Acts ii. 42.) St. Paul refers to it as "The Table of the Lord" and "The Chalice of the Lord". (I Cor. x. 21.); he also calls it "The Death of the Lord". (I Cor. xi. 26.)

The Acts states that the apostles went from house to house to celebrate this Holy Sacrifice. (Acts ii. 46.) There were, of course, no churches in apostolic times in Palestine. Whatever places of worship existed were in the hands of the Jews, who not only prohibited Christian worship in their synagogues, but moreover attempted to prevent it anywhere else.

In those early days of Christianity the Church was like Christ in the stable, or in exile in Egypt. Christ had given the apostles instructions about the Mass after His resurrection, when He also taught them many things about the future Church. Unless the apostles had been divinely aided they—ordinary men as they were—had never been able to give the Church an organization which is the admiration of the world. The apostles knew Chrst's mind with regard to the celebration of the Mass, and only awaited the opportunity of carrying it out.

When St. Peter went to Rome, and made it the center of Christian authority, he brought with him the tradition of the Mass as imparted to him by Our Divine Lord. This formed the basis of the ritual of the Mass. All the apostles observed the same essential rite in the celebration of the Holy Sacrifice. With the dispersion of the apostles into various countries they or their successors added to the essentials of the Mass, little by little, certain prayers and ceremonies which would make this act of worship more impressive. These additions corresponded

to the character of the people and the circumstances of the place.

The circumstances of the Church at Jerusalem and Antioch were different from those at Rome. Accordingly the non-essential additions to the Mass varied in these various places, which gave rise to what we call the different liturgies or rites of the Mass. The Roman rite embodied the tradition of St. Peter with the addition made by the authority of his successors. It is the Roman rite which predominates throughout the world.

As the Church gradually obtained freedom of worship she was able to impart to the Mass a setting which was appropriate to its sublime nature. It may be said in all truth that there is no ceremony among mankind as impressive as the Mass, especially a solemn high Mass. Father Faber, one of the Oxford men who came into the Church in Newman's day, said of the Mass that it is "the most beautiful thing this side of heaven . . . it came forth out of the grand mind of the Church and lifted us out of earth and out of self." Just as Christ, although born in a stable,

did not always remain there; so the Mass, whose origin was the simple rite of consecration, did not continue to be that merely, but as the Church gained liberty of worship her great act of sacrifice was embellished by everything that could lend dignity and impressiveness to its sublime nature.

Cardinal Wiseman describing the Mass says of its prayers and liturgy that "no human genius can hope to attain their beauty and sublimity: in these two qualities the Mass differs from all other offices in a remarkable manner. It has not merely flights of eloquence and poetry strikingly displayed in particular prayers, but it is sustained throughout in the higher sphere, to which its divine purpose naturally raises it. . . . If we take the entire service as a whole, it is constructed with the most admirable symmetry, proportioned in its parts with perfect judgment, and so exquisitely arranged as to excite and preserve an unbroken interest in the sacred action.

"No doubt to give full force and value to this sacred rite, its entire ceremonial is to be considered. The assistants with their noble vestments,

the chant, the incense, the more varied ceremonies which belong to a solemn Mass are all calculated to increase veneration and admiration. But still the essential beauties remain, whether the holy rite be performed under the golden vault of St. Peter's, with all the pomp and circumstance befitting its celebration by the Sovereign Pontiff, or in a wretched wigwam, erected in haste by some poor savages for their missionary."

Christ was God in the manger as well as in the temple. He was Lord of the World in Nazareth at a carpenter's bench, as well as when preaching the Sermon on the Mount or commanding the winds and the waves. The Mass is the Mass whether celebrated in a magnificent church or in a wayside chapel; whether the celebrant be the Holy Father or a humble chaplain; whether the priest be a saint or sinner. The value of the Mass is the sacrifice, which is the same always and everywhere.

But as a work of art the liturgy which surrounds the sacrificial act is considered by æsthetic judges to be the greatest masterpiece ever

composed. The wonderful embellishment of the Mass is not done in order to make a spectacle but to enable the faithful to enter into the spirit of this act of adoration.

Referring to the impressive ceremonies of the Mass, the Council of Trent says: "Since by reason of his nature man is so constituted that without exterior aid he can not easily rise to the contemplation of divine things, the Church, as a devoted Mother, has therefore introduced into her liturgy certain usages, as, for example, that some portions of the Mass should be recited in a low tone, others in a loud tone of voice. In like manner certain ceremonies, for instance the mystical blessings, the use of lights, incense, vestments and many things of that nature, she employs by apostolic prescription and tradition, in order both to manifest thereby the majesty of the great sacrifice, as well as to animate the minds of the faithful by these visible signs of religion and piety, to the consideration of the sublime mysteries hidden within this sacrifice." (Sess. 22. C. 5.)

The object of worship is twofold: to adore

God and to draw nearer to God. We adore God by the act of homage which the Mass pays Him. We draw nearer to God by living a holy life. Hearing Mass properly helps more than anything else to a goodly life. For the Mass recalls the death of the Lord. He died to atone for sin. The Mass thus reminds us that sin is the worst evil in the world, that it was sin that crucified Christ, and hence that we should avoid sin by every means in our power. Moreover the Mass obtains most special graces to strengthen us against the assaults of the world, the flesh and the devil.

The thief, on the right of Jesus on the Cross, was converted by the Bloody Sacrifice of Calvary. Many a sinner has been converted by attendance at the Unbloody Sacrifice of the Altar. The Mass most powerfully inculcates the value of the soul, since to save it Christ paid the great price of His life. Everything considered, there is nothing in the world so efficacious for holiness of life as the proper attendance at Mass.

There are some who assert that they can worship God in private just as well as in Church,

and that they need no trappings of man in order to adore God. Such persons usually end by not worshiping God at all. It is the experience of history that man left to himself ordinarily drifts away from God altogether. God who instituted the Mass as an act of worship knew our nature. When He commanded His Church to do until the end of time what He had done at the Last Supper, He knew that He was leaving with mankind the best possible means of glorifying Him and of helping man to attain everlasting life.

The honor of God and the sanctification of man constitute the main purpose of the Mass. If, with the constant reminder of redemption before us in the Mass, we fail to profit thereby unto uprightness of life, what is there in the whole range of spiritual aids that can be of help to us? The Mass speaks to us of the love of God, which proved itself by the supreme test; of the justice of God which exacted such atonement for sin; and of the mercy of God which was poured out with the Blood of the Redeemer. If neither love nor justice nor mercy can appeal to

us it is because we are impervious to the highest and most efficacious motives which influence mankind. Hence the value of the Mass as a help to holiness of life, besides being the most acceptable act of adoration which man can offer to His Maker.

When the priest approaches the altar to begin Mass he reminds us of Christ on His way to His sacred passion.

The description which follows pertains to low Mass only.

Having ascended the altar steps and arranged the chalice on the corporal, the celebrant descends to the floor level in order to begin the prayers which introduce the Mass. He begins by blessing himself, saying aloud: "In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost. Amen." The first action and the first words of the Mass are a reminder of the Bloody Sacrifice of Calvary.

The sign of the cross which the priest makes while blessing himself, vividly brings to mind the Cross of Redemption. It tells priest and people that the Crucifixion is to be enacted anew

on the altar of sacrifice. The cross was a sign of shame before it became the Scaffold of Redemption. From the time that it was hallowed by the death of Christ it has been the symbol of His worshipers; the proud badge of Christians the world over; the decoration of monarchs; and the consoling figure of patience and hope to the poor and suffering.

It was Christ Himself who made the first sign of the cross as He lay with outstretched arms on the wood of the Cross. Again He made the sign of the cross, as is piously believed, as He blessed the assembled disciples when He ascended into heaven. "And lifting up his hands, He blessed them. And it came to pass, whilst He blessed them, He departed from them, and was carried up to heaven." (Lk. xxiv. 50-51.) That this blessing of the Lord as He ascended into heaven was made by the sign of the cross is the teaching of St. Basil, and also of Dionysius the Carthusian, and the great theologian Suarez. (Disp. 51. S.2. N.5.)

Frequently during the Mass the sign of the cross is made by the celebrant, not only on him-

self but also upon the altar, the missal, the cruets and the sacred species. The sign of the cross is made so often because it is a declaration of our faith in three great mysteries: the Blessed Trinity, the Passion of Christ, and the Atonement. It is highly appropriate that the most sacred act of sacrifice, the Mass, should begin with an outward reminder of the Cross on which it was offered.

By making the sign of the cross, and invoking the names of the Father and Son and Holy Ghost, the priest proclaims that it is in God's name and by His authority that he presumes to ascend the altar of sacrifice and offer thereon the Divine Holocaust. The holiest person on earth is not worthy to stand in the place of Christ and offer in His name the Adorable Victim of the Altar.

Unless the clear command of God, transmitted to him at ordination, fortified him, the priest would never dare to exercise a function more sublime than that of the angels. The heavenly spirits adore God and minister to Him. The priest holds the God-Man in his hands, who

for the time being is subject to the disposal of His creature. No priest would presume on such intimacy with God unless by divine authorization: "Do this for a commemoration of Me." (Lk. xxii. 19.) Fortified by divine condescension, and encouraged by divine authorization, the priest, realizing his own insignificance and unworthiness, proceeds to act anew the Divine Mystery first performed by the Son of God.

When, therefore, we see the priest at the foot of the altar making the sign of the cross, it will remind us that we are at the foot of the Cross, as were Mary and John and Magdalene. By their presence they showed Jesus their loyalty and sympathy and doubtless greatly consoled the suffering Saviour. By our presence at Mass we likewise console Jesus, showing Him by our reverent presence that we are not unmindful of what He has done for us, nor ungrateful for His goodness.

When we kneel down to assist at Mass our intention should be to offer God, in the spirit of faith, a sacrifice of adoration for His sovereignty; of reparation for our sins; of thanksgiv-

ing for His benefits; and of petition for graces and favors which we hope to obtain. Mass thus attended gives glory to God and brings grace to man.

IX

THE CELEBRATION OF MASS

Introit to the Gloria

The Mass as instituted by Our Divine Lord consisted of three parts: the offertory, consecration and communion. Of these three parts the consecration is the principal one, for at the consecration the Divine Victim is offered up.

The Mass as now celebrated contains prayers and rites preparatory to and accompanying and following the parts instituted by Our Divine Lord. The object of these prayers and rites is to imbue the priest with the proper spirit for celebrating the Sacred Mysteries, and also to help the people to realize the import of the Divine Sacrifice that is being enacted in their presence and in their behalf.

After the priest has made the sign of the cross at the foot of the altar he begins the prayers of

the Mass with the forty-second Psalm, in which are found these words: "For Thou, O God, art my strength. . . . Send forth Thy light and Thy truth: they have led me and brought me unto Thy holy hill, and into Thy tabernacles. And I will go unto the altar of God; to God, who giveth joy to my youth." The purpose of this prayer is to animate the priest with confidence, in spite of his unworthiness. He is about to perform the most sacred act on earth, and calls upon God who made him to give him the grace for so exalted a function.

To further his petition he bows down in humility and acknowledges that he is a sinner, reciting the *Confiteor* to implore of God forgiveness for his transgressions before he discharges his holy office. The priest realizes that only he who is "innocent in hands, and clean of heart" may "go up to the mountain of the Lord, and stand in His holy place." (Ps. xxiii. 3, 4.) In the Mass the priest represents "the high priest, Jesus Christ, holy, innocent, undefiled, separated from sinners, and made higher than the heavens." (Heb. vii. 26.)

Not only does the priest recite the *Confiteor,* but the server at Mass also repeats it in the name of the congregation. All through the Mass the server is the spokesman for the people. A devout way of beginning attendance at Mass is to make an act of contrition while the priest and server at the foot of the altar are saying the *Confiteor.*

Just before ascending the altar steps the celebrant prays: "Take away from us our iniquities, we beseech Thee, O Lord: that we may be worthy to enter with pure minds into the Holy of Holies. Through Christ Our Lord. Amen."

Having thus thrown himself on the mercy of God he ascends the altar steps and proceeds to kiss the table of sacrifice which contains the relics of the martyrs, saying as he does so: "We beseech Thee, O Lord, by the merits of Thy saints whose relics are here, and of all the saints, that Thou wouldst vouchsafe to forgive me all my sins. Amen." He thus appeals anew to the All-holy God, whom he is to hold in his hands, that he may be made clean by the intercession of those who shed their blood in confessing Him. In venerating the relics of the martyrs he re-

calls the consoling doctrine of the Communion of Saints, whose help he now invokes for the discharge of his sublime office.

As we proceed with the Mass it will be made evident that it is what æsthetic critics have declared it to be—the masterpiece of composition. The priest, having called upon God and the saints to stand by him, takes heart to perform the ineffable ceremony which is to bring down upon the altar the Creator of heaven and earth that He may be offered a holocaust for His creatures.

The priest after kissing the altar, goes to the epistle side, and from the missal reads the introit. *Introit* means entrance. Formerly as the procession of clergy and people entered the church they chanted a psalm. The introit is the psalm which was thus chanted but which is now part of the Mass itself.

The introit gives the keynote to the Mass of the day. The Scripture which is read in it foreshadows the character of feast which is being celebrated. Perhaps the best way to make this clear is to present a few introits for various

feasts of the year. The introit for Christmas, the second Mass, is from the prophet Isaias: "A light shall shine upon us this day for Our Lord is born to us; and He shall be called wonderful, God, the Prince of Peace, the Father of the world to come; of whose reign there shall be no end." (Is. ix.) On the feast of the Holy Name of Jesus the introit runs: "In the name of Jesus let every knee bow of those that are in heaven, on earth, and under the earth; and let every tongue confess that the Lord Jesus Christ is in the glory of God the Father. O Lord, our Ruler, how excellent is Thy Name in all the earth." (Phil. ii: Ps. viii.) For the Mass on Ascension day the introit is from the Acts of the Apostles: "Ye men of Galilee, why wonder you, looking up to heaven? Alleluia. He shall so come as you have seen Him going up into heaven. Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia!" (Acts i.)

In these and other introits the spirit of the Mass about to be celebrated is indicated. They immediately strike a note in harmony with the occasion, whether it be the season of the year,

like Christmas, Lent or Easter; or the feast of a saint, whether martyr, confessor, apostle or virgin. The introit has a symbolic meaning also as it recalls the entrance of Jesus upon His passion.

All through the Mass, beginning with the prayers at the foot of the altar, we may piously trace a resemblance to the sacred tragedy of Calvary. The priest bowing down his head as he recites the *Confiteor,* before ascending the altar steps, may recall Christ bowed down in agony in Gethsemane. When the priest ascends the platform and kisses the altar he brings to mind the kiss of Judas which betrayed Him into the hands of His executioners after He had risen from His agony in the Garden; and now the introit may remind us of Our Saviour's entering upon His passion as He is being led, bound, to the court of the high priest.

After the introit the celebrant returns to the middle of the altar and recites the *Kyrie.* Before explaining the liturgical meaning of this invocation we may say that it may remind us of the cry for mercy which went out from the heart

of Peter as he beheld the compassionate countenance of Christ whom he had thrice denied. The *Kyrie* also serves to remind us that we need the mercy of Christ whom we have too frequently denied by unfaithfulness in His service.

Kyrie eleison is a Greek expression meaning "Lord have mercy on us". This Greek phrase may be a part retained from the Mass when, even at Rome, it was said in Greek.

In the early days of Christianity the Mass, as before remarked, was said in Hebrew (Aramaic), Latin and Greek. This may account for some of the Hebrew expressions retained in the Latin rite, such as *alleluia, hosanna, amen, sabaoth.* The Greek *Kyrie eleison,* and the Hebrew *amen* and *alleluia,* etc., seem to have been particularly identified with the Mass, and also to have been universally acceptable. It thus comes about that in the Mass, the Unbloody Sacrifice, we have the three languages which proclaimed to the world—by the title on the Cross—the Bloody Sacrifice of Jesus, the Saviour of the world.

In the *Kyrie* the three Divine Persons of the

Blessed Trinity are invoked, each one three times. First comes the *Kyrie eleison* three times, addressed to the Father; then the *Christe eleison* three times to the Son; and finally the *Kyrie eleison* again three times to the Holy Ghost. It is thus a triple invocation for mercy addressed to the triune God vividly recalling the great Christian mystery of the Trinity. It will thus be seen that the Mass besides being a sacrifice is also a teacher; recalling to our minds not only the sacred passion of Christ but also the saving truths which He taught.

The introit expresses the emotions which should animate priest and people during the Mass that is being celebrated. The realization of this sublime service is calculated to make us feel our unworthiness of participating in it. Hence the ninefold cry for mercy which the *Kyrie* evokes.

Only God, in His goodness, can render us worthy of being partakers in the offering of the Divine Victim. But He who forgave Peter his treason—and not only forgave him but made him the head of His kingdom on earth—will

have pity on our frailty, and in response to our cry of repentance will not only forgive us, but also grant us the grace worthily to share in His act of sacrifice. Humility never fails to draw upon the soul the favor of God, who never turns away from the humble and contrite of heart.

The *Kyrie* is an acknowledgment of our sorrow, and at the same time of our confidence in the goodness of Him whom we have offended. It is a combined act of contrition and of hope. What a beautiful disposition this is for participating in the great drama of Redemption! The *Kyrie* is moreover an appropriate prelude to the hymn of praise which directly follows—the *Gloria in excelsis Deo.* Except in Masses for the dead, and in some votive Masses, and those called ferial, and during the Sundays of Lent and Advent, when it is omitted, the *Gloria* is said immediately after the *Kyrie.*

The *Gloria* is called the greater doxology because it is an amplification of the *Gloria Patri,* which is usually termed the doxology. Doxology means a short verse praising God. It comes from

the Greek word *doxa* which usually begins such hymns of praise. The words *Gloria in excelsis Deo,* the beginning of the *Gloria* of the Mass, came directly from heaven. It was the hymn of praise sung by the angelic hosts on the night of Christ's birth in a stable. Although He humbled Himself by becoming weak and as nothing for our sake, heaven acclaimed Him Lord of earth, angels and men. And so now, when He is to be present under the sacramental species of the altar, the Church proclaims His glory and might.

The *Gloria in excelsis* may also remind us of the royal bearing of Christ as He stood before His false accusers. It may also recall His declaration that He was God, when the high priest solemnly adjured Him to state if He were the Son of God. It is most fitting that this hymn of praise should precede the voluntary abasement implied in Christ's humbling Himself to be present under the sacramental species. The God-Man, Jesus Christ, Infinite Majesty, humbles and sacrifices Himself. The Church by her liturgy glorifies Him, as heaven by its song of

praise glorified Him in the manger of Bethlehem.

St. John in vision beheld the angelic choirs adoring God in His abode of glory, and heard their hymn of praise: "Let us be glad and rejoice, and give glory to Him, the Lord our God, the Almighty." (Apoc. xix. 6, 7.) The Mass, as the supreme act of Christian worship, glorifies God not only by the offering of infinite value which it makes to the Divine Majesty, but also by the grateful hearts by which the offering is made. The *Gloria* is an expression of the joy of the faithful that they can offer to God something truly worthy of Him. It is also an effort on their part to add their adoration to that of the angelic hosts which perpetually sing the praises of their Eternal King. *Gloria in excelsis Deo*—glory to God on high!

If we rightly give glory to God it will bring us that peace which the angels proclaimed when they sang their hymn of adoration to the Babe of Bethlehem. "Glory to God on high, and on earth peace to men of good will." Peace is the outcome of being friends with God. The Mass

has for its purpose to glorify the Divine Majesty, and to reconcile man with God. Nothing so efficaciously tends to make us friends of God as does the Holy Sacrifice. Appropriately and whole-heartedly therefore should we join in spirit with the priest in saying *Gloria in excelsis Deo.*

Shortly before His sacred passion, Jesus took Peter, James and John up into a mountain and was there transfigured before them. His face shone as the sun and His garments glistened with the whiteness of snow. He would give those who were presently to see Him, as it were a worm and no man, a glimpse of His glory, in order that they might understand the depth of His abasement, and also be strengthened in the hour of their trial. So now, in the Mass, the Church proclaims the glory of Him who shortly will be offered a victim of propitiation.

Christ in the Mass takes the form of material substance in order that He may be mystically slain. The Creator assumes this material form in order that by the sacrifice of Himself He may enable us to become partakers of the divine na-

ture. "That ye may become partakers of the divine nature." (II Peter i. 4.) Surely God who is so good as to elevate us to share in divinity by taking on Himself our humanity, is deserving of our gratitude and of our hymn of praise. As often as we hear the *Gloria* in the Mass, it serves to remind us that God became man and sacrificed His life in order that we might live eternally, sharing His own everlasting life and blessedness. "As many as received Him to them He gave power to be made the sons of God." (Jn. i. 12.)

Thus the *Gloria* not only honors God, but moreover gives that peace to man which comes from the assurance that we may be associated forever with God's glory in the kingdom He has prepared for them that love Him.

X

THE CELEBRATION OF MASS

From the Gloria to the Offertory

After the *Kyrie*, which is an act of humility, and the *Gloria,* which is an act of praise, the priest proceeds to the side of the altar to his right, to offer to God a prayer for the assembled people. This prayer is called the *collect* because it is offered for the faithful who have come together, or collected, for the celebration of the Holy Sacrifice.

Previous to going from the center to the side of the altar, the priest turns to the congregation and says: *"Dominus vobiscum,"* which means "The Lord be with you." This may piously remind us of Christ's turning to Peter and by His glance converting the apostle who had denied him. It precedes the collect, or principal prayer of the day, and is an assurance that as Christ

granted mercy to Peter's silent plea for forgiveness, so will He be propitious to the prayer of the Church for the faithful present.

After the collect and some further prayers, the priest reads the epistle of the Mass of the day. Every day has its own special Mass. *Epistle* means letter. We speak of the epistles of St. Paul, and of St. John's epistles to the various churches. The New Testament is made up of four Gospels, the Acts of the Apostles, and the Epistles. The purpose of the Epistles as written by the apostles was to enlighten the world with regard to Christ, His teaching and His atonement. In the Mass is portrayed the great act of our redemption.

Christ's work as Redeemer consisted not only of atonement but also of enlightenment. He said of Himself: "I am the Light of the World." (Jn. viii. 12.) He is the Light by His teaching and example. His teaching is proclaimed in the Epistles and Gospels and by the voice of His Church, which He constituted as His voice, saying: "He that heareth you, heareth Me." (Lk. x. 16.)

Hence in the Mass which represents the work

of redemption, the doctrine of Christ is set forth preliminary to the great act of sacrifice which is the central and essential feature of this sacred rite. The teaching of Christ is also foreshadowed in the Old Testament, whence it follows that at the part of the Mass which we call the epistle, there is read sometimes portions of the Old Testament instead of the Epistles of the New.

After the reading of the epistle, which is followed by prayers or invocations called the *gradual,* the priest returns to the center of the altar preparatory to the reading of the gospel. This going to and fro by the priest, from the epistle to the gospel side of the altar, may devoutly recall Christ being sent from Pilate to Herod and back again, as He was made a mockery in the streets of Jerusalem.

Before reading the gospel the priest utters the following beautiful prayer: "Cleanse my heart and my lips, O Almighty God, who didst cleanse with a burning coal the lips of the prophet Isaias; and vouchsafe, in Thy loving kindness, so to purify me that I may be enabled worthily

to announce Thy holy gospel. Through Christ Our Lord. Amen."

Gospel means good news. The gospel tells us the good news of salvation which comes from Christ's incarnation, teaching and sacrifice of His life on the altar of the Cross. The good tidings were first proclaimed by the angel who announced to the shepherds on Christmas night: "Behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, that shall be to all the people: for, this day, is born to you a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord." (Lk. ii. 10, 11.)

Our Divine Lord Himself proclaimed that His mission was to announce the good news when He declared that He was anointed "to preach the gospel to the poor . . . to heal the contrite of heart, to preach deliverance to the captives . . . to set at liberty them that are bruised." (Lk. iv. 18, 19.) We have all been bruised by sin, and Christ is the physician of the soul who will heal all those who turn to Him in the right spirit. The gospel is the record of God's mercy to mankind. It is a word-picture of God made man, who dwelt among us.

AT THE GOSPEL

The gospel is read at Mass, not only for our instruction but also as an act of veneration for the word of God. It is most fitting that in the Holy Sacrifice the words of eternal life as recorded in the gospel should be announced. Christ sacrificed His life that we might have life, not the passing life of time, but the everlasting life of eternity. The gospel it is that gives us the message of our salvation, and it is therefore most appropriate that in the renewal of the great act of our redemption it should have a notable part, as it does.

Immediately before reading the gospel the priest prays as follows: "Give me Thy blessing O Lord! The Lord be in my heart and on my lips, that I may worthily, and in a becoming manner, announce His holy gospel. Amen."

He then makes the sign of the cross with his thumb on the missal and on his forehead, lips and breast as an indication that the whole doctrine of salvation, the whole message of the gospel is contained in the Cross. St. Paul calls the Gospel "The word of the Cross." He wished to know and to preach nothing else except Jesus

Christ crucified. For the Crucifixion testifies to God's love, the value of our soul, and the price of our redemption. The cross at the beginning of the gospel reminds us of all this.

The people make the triple sign of the cross with the priest, thus professing their faith in the Trinity and in the redemption wrought by the second Person of the adorable Trinity. Our Faith should be in our mind by belief, on our lips by prayer, and in our heart by love of God and our neighbor. The people always stand at the reading of the gospel in order to show their respect for the Word of God and also to indicate that they stand ready to uphold it by their conduct and, if need be, by their life.

In the gospel Christ Himself is our teacher. By standing in His presence we not only manifest our reverence for Him, but also show that we are not merely hearers but also doers of His word. By His doctrine Christ, who is the Way, the Truth and the Life (Jn. xiv. 6.) shows us the path to eternal life, to a share in His own life: "Behold what manner of charity the Father

hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called, and should be the sons of God." (I Jn. iii. 1.)

After the gospel comes the *creed*. The gospel presents Christ as the teacher of revealed truth. The creed declares the principal truths of Revelation. The creed is said on the Sundays of the year and on some of the notable feast days. It is a profession of faith in the Holy Trinity, the Incarnation, the Redemption, and a future everlasting life. Christ proclaimed that He came to give life. He did not refer to this present life, which His hearers already had, but to real life, unending life, a share in His own blessed eternal life.

God became man, assuming human nature, in order that man might become a partaker of the divine nature. He died on the Cross in order that we might live forever. By His death we are born to eternal life. It is fitting therefore that leading up to the central act of the Mass there should be a profession of faith in what the Mass stands for.

At first it might seem that a profession of faith in the Trinity has no connection with the Sacrifice of the Mass. But on reflection it will be seen

that it has everything to do with it. If there were no Trinity there would be no second Person of the Trinity. Without the second Person there would be no incarnation of the Son of God. Without the incarnation there would be no redemption. A chain is no stronger than its weakest link. Catholic truth is so constituted that if any one doctrine be untrue the whole body of doctrine collapses.

Since the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass is the mystical renewal of the Sacrifice of the Cross, it is only proper that by the cross we recall who He is that is sacrificed and for whom He makes the sacrifice. The creed declares that Christ who was crucified on Calvary and who on the altar is to be mystically crucified, is true God, the Only-begotten Son of the Eternal Father. Likewise the creed specifies for whom He made the sacrifice: "who for us men, and for our salvation, came down from heaven, and became incarnate by the Holy Ghost, of the Virgin Mary: and was made man. He was crucified also for us." (Nicene Creed) Thus the creed helps us to realize the great central and essential act of

the Mass, which is the mystical Sacrifice of Calvary.

Step by step the various prayers and rites of the Mass lead to a realization of the sublime act of worship which culminates in the adorable Sacrifice. While we are standing during the creed, we may in pious contemplation picture to ourselves Christ standing before Pilate and in answer to the question "Art Thou a king?", saying: "I am; but My kingdom is not of this world." It is well for us to reflect that Christ's blessed kingdom is not of this world, but that it is beyond. It is true that the Church is His kingdom on earth but it is only the way to the heavenly kingdom.

Some people think that virtuous living should always be rewarded here. But this life is probation; the grave is not the goal but starting point of man's real life. If God rewarded His faithful ones here we might serve Him for his gifts rather than for Himself. Christ is our example. He was the holiest person that this world has known. He was the beloved Son of God, yet He was the Victim of malicious men. His

Blessed Mother, saintliest of His creatures, had her reverses and her sorrows.

No; we must not look for our crown until life's warfare is over. Soldiers are decorated after the battle. As we stand during the creed these thoughts will help us to realize that we are soldiers of Christ. Soldiers prove their bravery and loyalty not on parade but on the battle-field. Man's life is a warfare. Therefore as followers of Christ we must be ready to carry our cross, whatever it may be, patiently and in the spirit of Faith, after our Leader and Model; Christ, the Eternal King.

The purpose of religion is not to free us from the cross but to give us the strength and motive for carrying it. We shall always have a cross to carry in one form or another. The more we try to avoid the cross the heavier it becomes. It becomes light when we carry it in company with Christ.

Every time we assist at Mass the doctrine of the Cross is proclaimed, for the Mass is a mystical Crucifixion. Hence dutiful attendance at Mass helps us to face the vicissitudes of life in

the Christian spirit. The more we understand the Mass the more it will mean to us, and the more it will help us to live as worthy followers of Christ. In these days of many and good prayer-books every Catholic should be able to assist at Mass intelligently and profitably.

Hearing Mass rightly every Sunday will fortify us for the struggles and contradictions which may be our portion during the week. The Mass itself is a great act of faith. Our mere attendance at Mass is a profession of our loyalty to God. The Church, divinely guided, commands us to make this act of faith publicly every Sunday. He who deliberately stays away from Mass on Sunday, without just cause, turns his back on God.

What makes missing Mass so serious a sin is that unlike most other sins it cannot plead passion as excuse. He who deliberately stays away from Mass, prefers his own ease and pleasure to the reverence he owes to the majesty of God. This is to slight God. No human monarch would tolerate such contempt on the part of his subjects. God has all eternity to justify His deal-

ings with mankind. His sun shines on the just and unjust alike, on those who serve Him and on those who ignore Him; but in His own time and way He will show that He is a rewarder of the good and a chastiser of the wicked. This idea is impressed on us by that passage in the creed wherein it says that Christ who was crucified for us "is to come again with glory to judge both the living and the dead; of whose kingdom there shall be no end." (Nicene Creed.)

It will thus be seen that the creed most admirably prepares the worshiper for participation in the most acceptable act of adoration which the creature can pay to the Creator.

The introit to the creed, inclusive, forms the first part of the Mass. With the offertory, which follows next, the second part of the divine tragedy of Calvary opens, culminating in the Sacrifice of the God-Man.

XI

THE CELEBRATION OF MASS

The Offertory

The prayers and rites which precede the offertory of the Mass are a prelude to the sacrifice proper, which begins with the offertory—that is, the offering of the sacrificial elements.

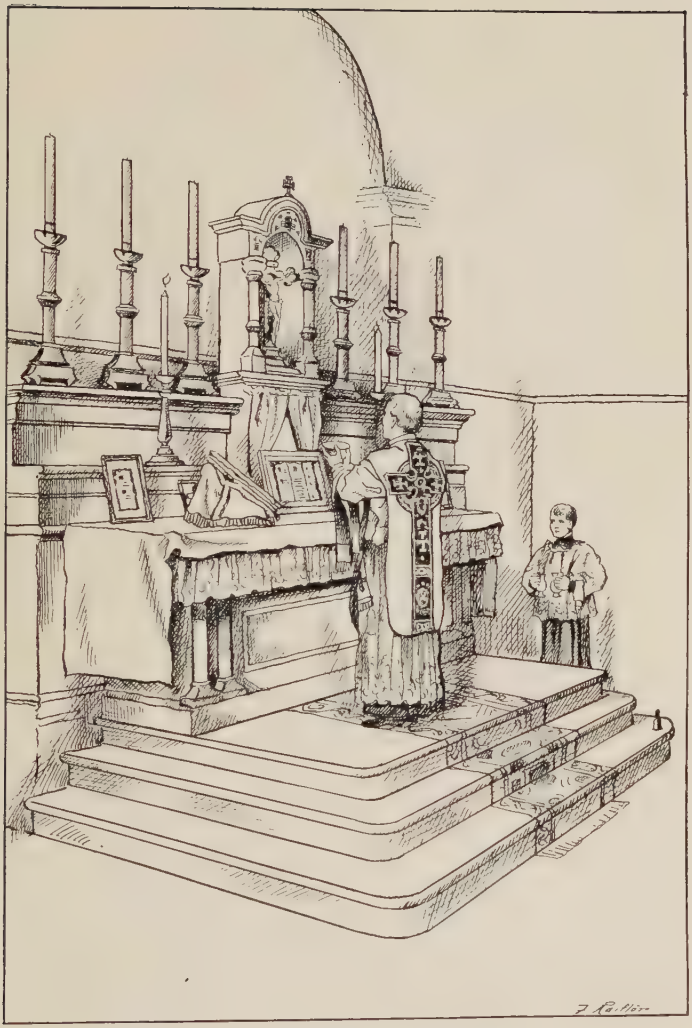
Bread made of wheat, and wine of grapes constitute the elements of the Eucharistic Sacrifice. At the first Mass, which was that celebrated by Our Saviour at the Last Supper, Our Divine Lord consecrated bread and wine, and prescribed these elements as the necessary matter for the celebration of the Unbloody Sacrifice. Why Christ chose bread and wine as the elements for the Eucharistic Sacrifice we do not know. It was His will, and that is sufficient.

However, when we reflect that the Eucharist is both sacrament and sacrifice we may readily

see the remarkable propriety of bread and wine as its constituents. Wheat from which the bread is made, and grapes from which the wine is produced are obtained from the earth by the labor of man. Both wheat and grapes require cultivation. And the bread and wine which are made from them demand labor and care. Bread and wine, therefore, although in their origin the gift of God, in their finished state represent the toil of man, and as such give him a certain proprietary right over them which enables him to offer them as his gift to God.

Moreover as the Eucharist is intended to be received by man as food there is hardly anything more universally procurable than bread and wine. And even where it is impossible to grow wheat or the vine, the product of both may be transported and preserved indefinitely as flour or wine. Besides they fulfill the requirements of the clean oblation foretold by the prophet Malachias (Mal. i. 11.), and the type of sacrifice as presented by the offering of Melchisedech the priest of the Old Law. (Gen. xiv. 18.)

By reason, therefore, of their universality and



AT THE OFFERING OF THE HOST

purity, and their fitness as food, they are admirably adapted for the Eucharistic species. Furthermore, bread and wine, by a process of nature, are transformed into the flesh and blood of man. How this takes place we ourselves in whom the change is effected, do not understand. We partake of bread and wine, and by a natural process of which we are not even conscious these elements are converted into our own flesh and blood.

Bread and wine are changed into ourselves by *natural* action; but these same elements become the Body and Blood of Christ by *supernatural* action. When these elements become ourselves the change is evident; but when they become the Body and Blood of Christ the change is not evident. For this reason the Eucharist is called the Mystery of Faith. We accept it on Christ's word. On His word who changed water into wine; who fed the multitude with a few loaves and fishes; who gave sight to the blind and speech to the dumb and raised the dead to life. On His word who proclaimed that He was God —equal to the Eternal Father in all things—and

who proved His divinity by doing the works of God.

The miracle of the Eucharist consists not only in the change of the substance of bread and wine into Christ, but in the fact that the elements remain outwardly the same as before the change. If, after the words of consecration, we could see Christ on the altar it would indeed be a miraculous change. But transubstantiation is something more than that, for it is not only the change of substance, but this change without any exterior indication of it.

This means that there is something imperceptible in material things which is called the substance of things and makes them to be what they are. This imperceptible something manifests itself by shape, size, color, etc. Ordinarily when one thing changes into another its outward appearance changes with it. The miracle and mystery of the Eucharist is that when the substance of the bread and wine are changed, the outward form—or what we call the appearance—does not change. This is what makes the Eucharist so great a mystery, for the outward form

is maintained divinely, not naturally, after the substance has been changed.

Hence when the priest at Mass consecrates the sacred species he terms the wonderful action "a mystery of Faith." What was bread is no longer bread but the Body of Christ, although there is no outward change to show what has occurred. There is nothing to show for the change of substance except the word of Christ. But that is more than enough. Our religion is called Our Holy Faith because it is based on faith in Christ and His word.

The bread which is offered for the Holy Sacrifice must be made of pure wheaten flour mixed with natural water and baked. The wine must be from ripe grapes, and must be fully fermented.

Immediately after the creed—or after the gospel if there be no creed—the priest, after a short prayer, removes the veil from the chalice and dedicates to God the host which is to be consecrated at the Mass. The uncovering of the chalice serves to remind us of Christ being stripped

of His garments preparatory to His cruel scourging at the pillar.

The priest, having in view the consecration which is soon to follow, prays thus as he offers the host: "Accept, O Holy Father, Almighty and Eternal God, this unspotted host, which I, Thy unworthy servant offer unto Thee, my living and true God, for my innumerable sins, offences and negligences, and for all here present; as also for all faithful Christians, both living and dead, that it may avail both me and them for salvation unto life everlasting. Amen."

Next follows the offering of the chalice after the priest has poured into it wine mixed with a little water. The wine mixed with water symbolizes the divine and human nature of Christ, who is true God and true man. This beautiful and significant prayer is said by the priest as he pours the wine and water into the chalice: "O God, who in creating human nature hast wonderfully dignified it, and still more wonderfully reformed it; grant that by the mystery of this water and wine we may be made partakers of the divine nature of Him who vouchsafed to

become partaker of our human nature, namely, Jesus Christ our Lord, Thy Son who liveth and reigneth with Thee in the unity of the Holy Ghost, one God, world without end. Amen."

Thus we have in the Mass a prayer for the fulfilment of what the Apostle Peter writes in his second Epistle: "By Christ God has given us most great and precious promises; that by these we may be made partakers of the divine nature." (II Peter i. 4.) What a glorious destiny that is for man, to become a partaker of the divine nature! Truly Christ's birth as man is our birth to divinity, if only we do our part.

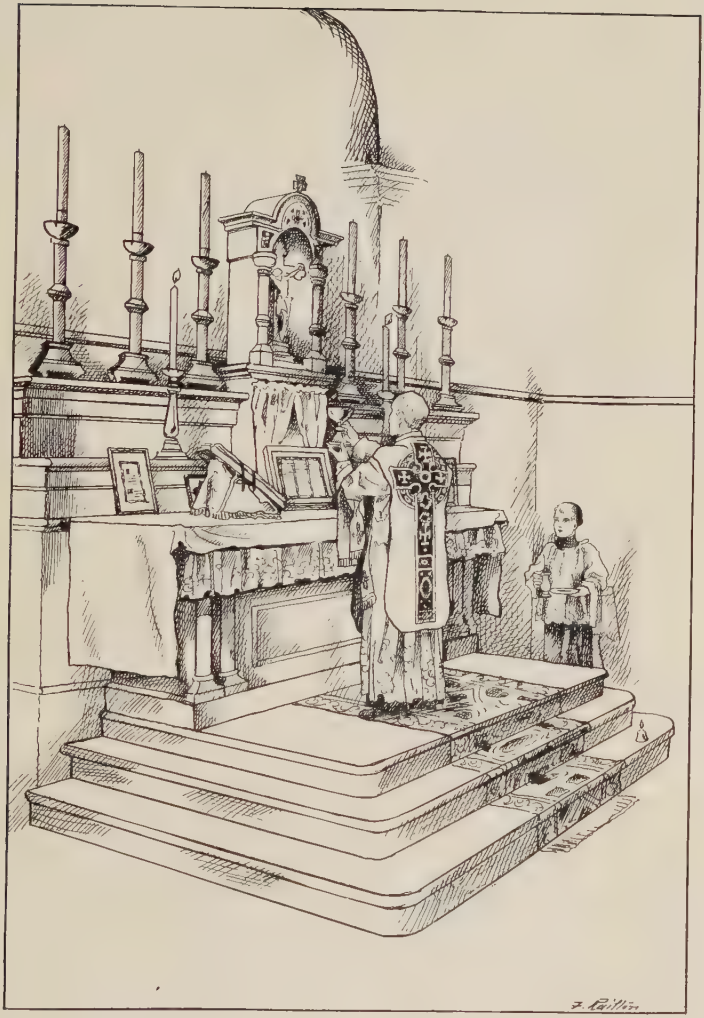
Again we are reminded of the words of St. John: "Behold what manner of charity the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called, and should be the sons of God." (I Jn. iii. 1.) As often as we see the priest pouring the water and wine into the chalice, as he receives the cruets from the altar boy, let us reflect on our last end, which is to be a child of God in that blessed home He has prepared for them that love Him. "Think on thy last end and thou shalt not sin." If our attendance at Mass

serves to remind us that although we must live in this world yet we must not live solely for it, but mainly for the life of eternal happiness beyond, we shall go forth from the church fortified to do our Christian duty regardless of the fear or favor of the world.

Returning to the middle of the altar the priest offers the chalice to God saying as he raises it aloft: "We offer unto Thee, O Lord, the chalice of salvation, beseeching Thy clemency that it may ascend before Thee, as a sweet odor, for our salvation and for that of the whole world. Amen."

Having offered the chalice the priest goes to the epistle side of the altar where he washes his fingers, and wipes them with the little linen towel presented by the altar boy. He does this in order that his fingers may be as immaculate as possible when he touches the immaculate Body of Christ after the consecration. It is also a reminder of the purity of soul with which he should celebrate the Holy Sacrifice.

This ceremony also recalls Pilate's washing his hands after having unjustly condemned



AT THE OFFERING OF THE CHALICE

Christ to death. Yielding to the threats of the Jews, Pilate, knowing that Christ was innocent, condemned Him nevertheless to the cruel death of crucifixion. It is the only case in the history of the world where a judge having solemnly proclaimed the accused innocent, condemned him, notwithstanding, to the penalty of the guilty. If the world condemned the innocent Christ, we should not be alarmed if, at times, it condemns us who have so often deserved chastisement for our transgressions.

On the return to the center of the altar the priest turns to the people and invites them by the *Orate Fratres* to join with him in prayer to God that He may deign to accept the offering which is made for the Holy Sacrifice. The priest turning towards the people at the *Orate Fratres* recalls Christ as Pilate, pointing to Him, said: *"Ecce Homo"*—"Behold the man." We have seen the picture of Christ, after the scourging and crowning with thorns, standing before the multitude, with a purple rag over His shoulders and a reed in His hand in mockery of His royalty, a spectacle for angels and men.

Nothing appeals to us like suffering. We love our mother so much because we know that she has proved her love for *us by* suffering. Sacrifice is the language of love. It is easy to profess love by words; but the test is what our love prompts us to do. We know that our mother's love would stand the test of any and every sacrifice. That is why our love for her is so deep and strong and lasting.

Christ suffered so much for us in order to prove His love for us, and to win our love in return. If our love for Him be genuine it will show itself by our fidelity to Him regardless of whatever it may cost us. Fidelity to God may at times mean the sacrifice of ease, gain or life itself. If that be the price we must pay in order to be the children of God, we should cheerfully pay it. This world and its vanity will pass away. Life with God will be everlasting.

The Mass preaches a silent sermon by its sacred rites and ceremonies. It transports us to another world for a while, and proclaims again what Christ said: "For what shall it profit a man, if he gain the whole world, and suffer the

loss of his soul?" (Mk. viii. 36.) For in the Mass we see the great price which Our Blessed Redeemer paid for our salvation—a price no less than the laying down of His life in extreme pain and shame.

If Christ did so much for our salvation we should be ready to do something for it ourselves. The purpose of the Mass is to put before us the sacrifice which Christ made for us in order that we may appreciate His love and the value of our soul. A great saint on being tempted to sin by a courtesan replied to her advances that the price of sin was too great; adding, that it would cost the loss of the soul for which Christ gave His life.

Mass, therefore, besides being the highest act of worship which the creature can pay to the Creator, is also, when rightly understood, the most effective sermon that can be preached. Calvary is God's silent discourse of His love for the world, and also His appeal for our love in return. No wonder that He desired to perpetuate for all time the message of Calvary by the Holy

Sacrifice of the Mass, thus ever renewing His pledge of love and His appeal for ours.

At the offertory, when the priest presents to God the elements of the Eucharistic Sacrifice, we may offer to the heart of Christ what He so much desires—our own heart. In former times the faithful carried to the altar, at the offertory, the bread and wine which was to serve for the sacrifice. They brought other gifts also which they left in the sanctuary for the maintenance of divine worship. In this way they added a sacrifice of their own to the sacrifice which was being offered in their behalf at the altar.

God appreciates our gifts in proportion to what it costs us to make them. In giving Him our hearts we present Him with a gift of greatest value, and respond to that loving appeal of His: "Son, give Me thy heart!" (Prov. xxiii. 26.) It is a wonderful thing to be able to give the Creator something that is really acceptable to Him. And if that gift be our heart, what a happiness it is to know that we have given it to Him who desires it only that He may share His blessedness with us for all eternity.

XII

THE CELEBRATION OF MASS

The Preface and Consecration

By the offertory the Eucharistic elements have been dedicated to God. The bread and wine have been set aside as pertaining to divine worship, as belonging in a special way to God. They have been sanctified by the prayers of the Church which have brought God's blessing down upon them. They now await the mysterious action by which they will become the Body and Blood of the Saviour, and as such offered as a sacrifice of infinite worth to the Divine Majesty.

Immediately preceding this great central action of the Mass there are certain ceremonies and prayers which usher in this most sublime rite of worship. This essential part of the Mass begins with the preface. *Preface* means introduction; and in the rite of the Mass it introduces

the prayers and actions which lead up to the consecration.

At the Last Supper Jesus, before pronouncing the divine words which instituted the mystery of the Eucharist, gave thanks to His eternal Father. So now in the Mass, the priest, as a prelude to the sacred act of consecration, begins by giving thanks to God, joining his voice to that of the heavenly hosts and saying with them "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God of Hosts. The heavens and the earth are full of Thy glory; Hosanna in the highest. Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord: Hosanna in the highest!" After this hymn of praise and thanksgiving the priest enters into the Holy of Holies, where alone with God he is to offer the innocent Victim in sacrifice to the Divine Majesty.

Immediately after the preface the priest lowers his voice so that it becomes inaudible to the people. He is about to be face to face with God. He has been set apart and ordained to offer sacrifice for the people. He alone, by virtue of his ordination to the priesthood, is designated by God to offer the Unbloody but Real Sacrifice

of the Cross. He alone has been anointed to hold in his hands Him who made him. He alone has been appointed by Christ's spouse, the Church, to speak those words first uttered by Jesus Himself, by virtue of which the bread and wine become the Body and Blood of our Saviour.

But although the priest in the Holy of Holies is alone with God, he represents the faithful. He stands at the altar of sacrifice, like Christ on Calvary, who offered Himself for all.

In considering the Mass we must keep in mind that it is essentially a sacrificial act. What primarily gives glory to God and brings grace to the faithful present is not the personal worth of priest or people, not the service of song or discourse, not anything which priest or people may of themselves do; but the offering of Jesus Christ, a victim of infinite worth, to the Divine Majesty. The piety and devotion of priest and people, although most accordant with the august Sacrifice, are not what constitute the Mass nor what make it acceptable to the Divine Majesty.

Sometimes those who are not Catholics wonder at the rapt attention of the faithful at Mass.

They still more wonder at the large attendance of the faithful at Mass at unseasonable hours, and often at considerable inconvenience. Their greatest wonder, however, is to see a large body of intelligent people attending a service where there is neither sermon nor hymn. They fail to realize that the Mass is primarily a worship of sacrifice, and that everything else is incidental. Catholics go to Mass to assist at the oblation of the Divine Victim of the Cross to the Godhead.

When a vast multitude attend the coronation of a monarch it is to witness his induction into office. Whatever precedes or follows the actual coronation may be interesting, spectacular and attractive, but what matters mainly is the coronation. The succession to the throne would be just as valid if the coronation took place in a prison cell, or in the heart of the forest, without the pomp and circumstance which ordinarily accompany this impressive function. What matters is the conferring of the crown by legitimate authority or by right of natural succession.

So it is with the Mass. The Church surrounds

a solemn high Mass with the most impressive ceremonies of sacred rites and chant and discourse. Nothing is too good for the sublimest act of worship that can be paid to God by mankind. At the same time all these embellishments may be dispensed with in the celebration of a low Mass, without detracting a particle from the essential value of the sacrifice.

The Church employs an elaborate ceremonial for her solemn service because man is a creature of sentiment as well as reason. If we were entirely spiritual the Mass of itself would impress us, without any external ceremonial. But as we are material as well as spiritual, influenced by the senses as well as by the intellect, our Holy Mother the Church speaks to us not only by ideas but also by ceremonial. That is why the ceremonies of low Mass, although not so impressive as those of high Mass, are nevertheless so wonderfully adapted to impress the worshiper with the immense significance of what is transpiring at the altar.

Catholics assist at Mass, therefore, not to hear a sermon, no matter how eloquent; not to hear

sacred chant, no matter how inspiring; not to join in a service of song, no matter how acceptable to God; but primarily to adore God who is present on the altar, and to participate in the Sacrifice of the God-Man, Jesus Christ, to the Divine Majesty. The priest may be cultured or rude, the music inspiring or distracting, the preacher eloquent or a bore; it does not affect the nature of the act of adoration which is offered to God.

Sometimes the celebrant of the Mass may be unworthy of his sacred character; he may go through the Mass in haste, and with disregard for the decorum which should accompany the most sacred function on earth. No matter; the people do not go to Mass for the priest but for God. It is very seldom, however, that a priest is unmindful of his holy office. It has happened, nevertheless, that an unworthy priest has celebrated Mass in an unbecoming manner, but this no more detracts from the Mass than does the improper attitude of a judge detract from a valid legal decision pronounced by him.

It is a proof of Catholic faith that the people

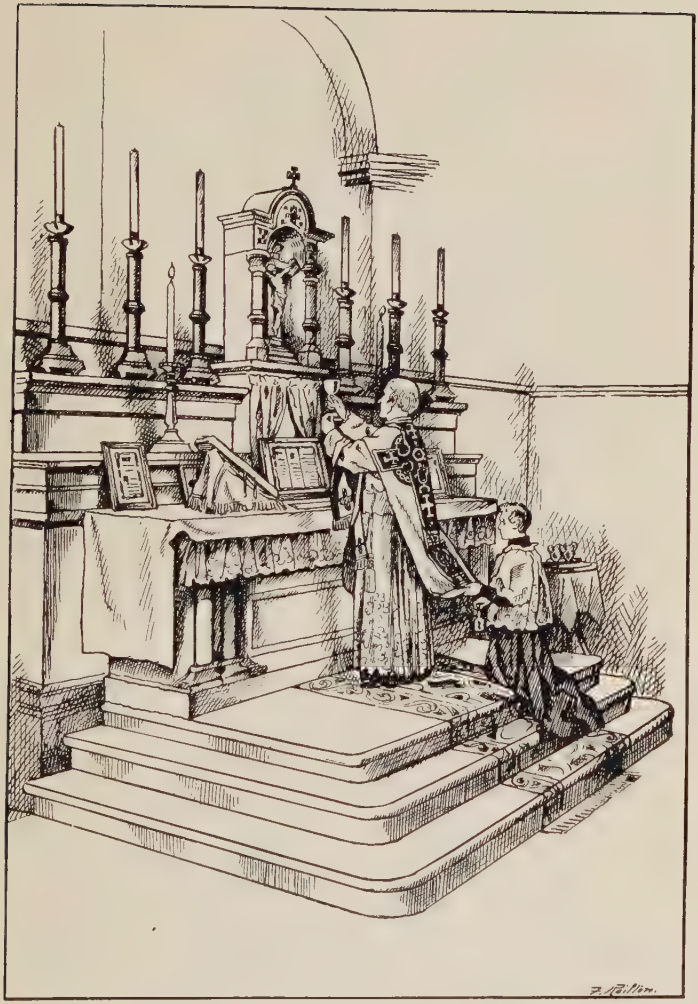
instead of losing reverence for the Mass when celebrated unbecomingly, pray for the disedifying priest, and also by their devotion endeavor to make up for his shortcomings. This is because Catholics realize that the Mass is essentially not a human affair but an act of divine adoration which employs man in its accomplishment. We attend Mass therefore to worship God by the act of worship instituted by Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

We come now to that part of the Mass to which everything else either leads up or follows, namely: the *consecration.* The apostles in saying Mass did precisely what Christ directed them to do when He said the first Mass. After changing the bread into His Body and the wine into His Blood He commanded them to do the very same thing which He then did. "Taking bread, He gave thanks, and broke, and gave to them, saying: This is My Body, which is given for you. Do this for a commemoration of Me. In like manner the chalice also, after He had supped, saying: This is the chalice, the New

Testament in My Blood, which shall be shed for you." (Lk. xxii. 19, 20.)

When Christ said "Do this for a commemoration of Me," He meant just what the words implied, otherwise He had spoken needlessly. And what did Christ do at this time? He first changed the bread into His Body—"This is My Body." He did not say it was a figure or type or symbol, but His Body. He emphasized His meaning by adding "which is given for you." Christ then gave Himself for us to be immolated on Calvary when His Body was tortured unto death. By the first consecration the bread became Christ, since His Body at the moment was His living self. By the second consecration, that of the chalice, the wine became His Blood. This mystical separation of the Blood from the Body shows the death of the Lord. "For as often as you shall eat this Bread, and drink the Chalice, you shall show the death of the Lord, until He come." (I Cor. xi. 26.)

On the Cross the Blood of Christ was really separated from His Body, causing His death. In the Mass His Blood is mystically separated



AT THE ELEVATION OF THE CHALICE

from His Body. This mystical separation shows, in Christ's appointed way, His death on the Cross. The consecration renews the Sacrifice of Calvary. It is the oblation of the Victim immolated on the Cross.

The Mass accordingly is both a relative sacrifice inasmuch as it relates to the Sacrifice of the Cross, which it commemorates, and a real sacrifice in itself inasmuch as it is Christ who offers on the altar His Body and His Blood, being Priest and Victim at the same time; the priest who celebrates the Mass acting as Christ's representative. This is why the celebrant, when consecrating, does not say "This is the Body of Christ."; but says "This is My Body.", speaking for Christ. By the separate consecration of the host and the chalice the death of the Lord is shown or commemorated, because the twofold consecration is a mystical separation of Body and Blood and represents in an unbloody manner the bloody death of Christ who was sacrificed on the Cross.

Leading up to this mystical action are the prayers which constitute what is called the canon

of the Mass. *Canon* means rule or regulation. In the Mass it signifies the liturgy regulated by the Church for the sacrificial act of the Mass—the consecration. The canon begins directly after the preface, with the following prayer: "We therefore humbly pray and beseech Thee, most merciful Father, through Jesus Christ, Thy Son, Our Lord, to accept and bless these gifts, these offerings, these holy, undefiled sacrifices, which, in the first place, we offer Thee for Thy Holy Catholic Church . . . and for all here present, whose faith and devotion are known to Thee; for whom we offer, or who offer up to Thee this sacrifice of praise for themselves and all belonging to them, for the redemption of their souls, for the hope of their welfare and salvation."

After another prayer, calling upon the Mother of God and the saints for their intercession the priest proceeds: "And this oblation do Thou, O God, vouchsafe to make in every respect blessed, approved, ratified, reasonable, and acceptable, that for us it may become the Body and the Blood of Thy most beloved Son, Jesus Christ Our Lord, who the day before He suffered, took

bread into His holy and venerable hands, and with eyes lifted up towards heaven, to Thee, O God, His Almighty Father, giving thanks to Thee, did bless, break and give to His disciples, saying: 'Take, and eat ye all of this. *This is My Body.*' " Here the priest genuflects, adores the Sacred Host; elevates it; places it on the corporal; again genuflects, adoring it a second time. Meanwhile, as the priest genuflects and raises the Consecrated Host aloft for the adoration of the people, the bell rings in order to have all present unite in the act of adoration being paid to Jesus Christ.

The priest then proceeds with the following prayer: "In like manner, after the supper taking also this excellent chalice into His holy and venerable hands, and giving Thee thanks, He blessed and gave to His disciples, saying: 'Take, and drink ye all of this: *For this is the chalice of My Blood of the New and Eternal Testament; the Mystery of Faith; which shall be shed for you, and for many, unto the remission of sins.* As often as ye shall do these things, ye shall do them in remembrance of Me.' " After this, genu-

flecting the priest adores; elevates the chalice; places it on the corporal; and adores again; the bell meanwhile ringing thrice as before in order to have the people join in adoration with the celebrant.

After several prayers for the people who are present and for the faithful at large, the priest makes the following beautiful plea for the faithful departed: "Be mindful, O Lord, of Thy servants and handmaids who are gone before us, with the sign of faith, and rest in the sleep of peace. To these, O Lord, and to all who rest in Christ, grant, we beseech Thee, a place of refreshment, light and peace. Through the same Christ Our Lord. Amen."

This commemoration of the dead is followed again by prayers for the living, which lead up to the *Pater Noster*—the Lord's Prayer, or as we call it, the *Our Father*. This is the prayer which Christ Himself taught us to say, whence it is called the Lord's Prayer. It is a petition to the Father of us all, for what we need in order to serve Him faithfully on earth that we may reign with Him eternally hereafter. Christ in

the Eucharist is the Bread of Life, which if we partake of worthily will nourish us unto everlasting life.

The Mass is a great miracle. In it the products of the earth, bread and wine, are changed into the Body and Blood of Christ Our Lord. This is, indeed, a great miracle. But we are surrounded with miracles if we only open our eyes to see them. We are astonished at the miracle of the loaves and fishes whereby Our Lord fed the multitude of five thousand with a handful of food; but we are not astonished by another greater miracle before our eyes.

It was an amazing thing to feed the multitude with the few loaves and fishes; but reflect on what God is doing perpetually by way of feeding the human race. Every year the Creator feeds out of the earth nearly two billion people. The bread which is served at our table, whence does it come? From the earth, by the almighty power of God. Bread is made of flour; flour from wheat; wheat comes from the soil. Thus the bread which our mothers bake comes really from the earth.

If God can change the elements of the earth into wheat, and wheat into the flesh and blood of man, it is not surprising that He should change bread and wine into His own Body and Blood. And this He does at the Mass; only as the Mass is the Mystery of Faith the change is effected without the usual external transformation in order that we might exercise the virtue of faith, believing on God's words just as firmly as we should believe on the evidence of our senses. This is what makes the Mass so wonderful. It is not only an act of worship, but also of faith, and moreover of charity, also, for in the Mass we pray not only for ourselves but for others as well.

The Mass is the official act of worship of Christ's Church. The Mass affords us the best means on earth of glorifying God and of saving our souls. For the Mass recalls the death of Our Lord, a death in torments for our sake.

From the preface to the *Pater Noster* the Mass graphically reminds us of Christ's passion. The preface, which is the introduction of the consecration, reminds us of Christ's condemna-

tion to death by Pilate, which was the beginning of the tragedy of Calvary. The prayers and rites from the preface to the consecration may recall for us the Way of the Cross from Pilate's judgment seat to the hill of Calvary. When the priest, after the consecration of the host, raises it aloft for our adoration we are reminded of Christ nailed to the Cross and elevated on it. At the elevation of the Chalice we can behold in spirit the Blood of Jesus as it flows from the many wounds of His sacred Body. During the prayers which follow the consecration we may hear the prayers of Jesus for the conversion of sinners; and at the *Pater Noster* we may picture to ourselves the conversion of the penitent thief, and hear Christ's words of forgiveness: "This day thou shalt be with Me in Paradise." (Lk. xxiii. 43.)

Thus it is that the Mass, like the rosary, is a reminder of our redemption, recalling the words of the apostle: "The Lord Jesus, the same night in which He was betrayed, took bread, and giving thanks, broke and said: Take ye, and eat; this is My Body, which shall be delivered for

you: this do for the commemoration of Me. In like manner also the chalice, after He had supped, saying: This chalice is the New Testament in My Blood: this do ye, as often as you shall drink, for the commemoration of Me. For as often as you shall eat this Bread, and drink the Chalice, you shall show the death of the Lord, until He come." (I Cor. xi. 25-26.)

The Mass is therefore the showing of the death of the Lord and the oblation of the immolated Christ to the Eternal Father. Attendance at Mass is like standing at the foot of the Cross on Calvary. The more frequently and devoutly we attend Mass the more certain may we be of everlasting life.

XIII

THE CELEBRATION OF MASS

Pater Noster to End

The *Pater Noster,* that is the *Our Father,* has been called by Tertullian the abbreviated gospel, since it contains almost the whole sum of the doctrine and law of Christ. The fatherhood of God; adoration of God; man's duty to God; the need of God's mercy; and the obligation of prayer: all these are embraced in the Lord's Prayer. It is a compendium of man's relations with his Maker. Fittingly, therefore, does it find a prominent place in the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass.

It is the first prayer to break the reverent silence which ensues after the consecration. In a loud voice the priest, with arms extended in the attitude of a supplicant, prays to God in the very words which fell from the lips of Christ

when He taught His followers how they should pray. The *Pater Noster* recalls to mind the seven last words of Jesus as He hung on the Cross. Then He prayed to His Father and ours for our forgiveness; He proclaimed that He had fulfilled the will of His Father, which is also our main concern in life; and finally He commended His spirit into the hands of the Eternal Father, which should be our last aspiration also.

While the celebrant is saying the *Pater Noster,* a very excellent devotional practice is to meditate, phrase by phrase, on this prayer which came from heaven. We are so accustomed to saying the *Our Father* that we may fail to appreciate fully its significance, and its power for helping us to walk courageously in the path of duty which leads to heavenly bliss.

Let us meditate on this prayer, word for word, and reflect on the consoling and strengthening ideas which it presents: "Our Father, who art in heaven—hallowed be Thy Name—Thy Kingdom come—Thy Will be done on earth as it is in heaven.—Give us this day our daily bread —and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive

those who trespass against us.—And lead us not into temptation.—But deliver us from evil.—Amen." What a consoling thought it is that the Creator of heaven and earth is not a far off isolated Being, but Our Father! How grateful we should be that God is Our Father! The Mass enables us to express our gratitude in a way acceptable to His Divine Majesty, for by the Mass we offer the Only-begotten Son as our thank-offering to the Eternal Father.

Following the *Pater Noster* the priest takes the Consecrated Host in his hands, and holding it over the chalice breaks it, depositing a part of it in the chalice. The host is broken in order to show the Eucharist as a sacrifice, for the breaking symbolizes in a vivid manner Christ's violent death on the Cross. The fracture of the host expresses the same thing as the consecration, namely: the Sacrifice of Calvary. The host broken over the chalice attests that the Blood therein contained came from the wounded and mangled Body of Christ, and that in consequence the Body and Blood constitute one sacrifice and one offering.

Moreover the breaking of the host is a preparation for the communion which soon follows. Hence the Mass, in Scripture, is referred to as "the breaking of bread." Christ had foretold that He was to give His followers Bread from heaven: "The Bread that I will give, is My Flesh, for the life of the world." (Jn. vi. 52.)

Jesus gives Himself for the life of the world; first, by sacrificing Himself for our salvation, and secondly by giving Himself to us as sacrificial food in Holy Communion. "I am the living Bread which came down from heaven. If any man eat of this Bread, he shall live forever; and the Bread that I will give, is My Flesh, for the life of the world. . . . For My Flesh is meat indeed, and My Blood is drink indeed. . . . As the living Father hath sent Me, and I live by the Father, so he that eateth Me, the same also shall live by Me." (Jn. vi. 51-58.) Holy Communion means the holy union of Christ with ourselves, which is effected by our reception of Himself under the consecrated species of the sacrament of the Blessed Eucharist.

Before receiving Holy Communion, the priest

—realizing his sinfulness and his unworthiness to receive the All-holy Christ—cries out in the *Agnus Dei* for mercy: "Lamb of God, who takest away the sins of the world, have mercy on us!" This petition he makes a second time; and then adds a third prayer for peace: "Lamb of God, who takest away the sins of the world, grant us Thy peace!" The prayer is for that peace which only God can bestow; that peace which the world can neither give nor take away. Both the forgiveness of God and His peace are necessary to fortify the soul to approach and receive Christ in the Holy Eucharist.

The priest—having proclaimed his need of forgiveness by the *Agnus Dei*—inclines his head and thus prays to His Sacramental Lord: "Lord Jesus Christ, Son of the living God, who according to the will of Thy Father, through the cooperation of the Holy Ghost, hast by Thy death given life to the world, deliver me by this, Thy most sacred Body and Blood, from all my iniquities and from all evils; and make me always adhere to Thy commandments, and never permit me to be separated from Thee; who with

the same God the Father and Holy Ghost livest and reignest world without end. Amen."

Maintaining the same reverent attitude, he continues with the following prayer: "Let not the participation of Thy Body, O Lord Jesus Christ, which I though unworthy, presume to receive, turn to my judgment and condemnation; but through Thy goodness may it avail for the safety of my soul and body and be to me salvation, who livest and reignest with God the Father, in the unity of the Holy Ghost, world without end. Amen."

The priest now takes the consecrated host in his hands and bringing the broken parts together, holds them in his left hand, while with the right he strikes his breast saying as he does so: "*Domine, non sum dignus*, etc." which means, "O Lord, I am not worthy that Thou shouldst enter under my roof; say but the word, and my soul shall be healed." This invocation he repeats thrice, each time striking his breast, in protestation of his unworthiness. And indeed no man, no matter how holy, is worthy to receive his God. We receive Holy Communion not be-

cause of our worthiness, but because of God's goodness.

The Blessed Eucharist is the sacrament of God's love. "God so loved the world, as to give His Only Son." (Jn. iii. 16.) The Only Son so loved us as to give His life for us on the Cross, and to give Himself to us in Holy Communion. We receive the Blessed Eucharist not because we are worthy but because of Christ's condescension. Our Saviour is so desirous of giving Himself to us that He not only invites us to receive Him but commands us. He wants to give Himself to us because He knows that receiving Him is the best means of salvation and sanctification. He desires our sanctification in order to share His glory with us. Nothing defiled can enter heaven. In proportion as we become holy, in that measure can God impart His blessedness to us. "He that eateth My Flesh, and drinketh My Blood, hath everlasting life: and I will raise him up in the last day." (Jn. vi. 55.)

Where Christ's Body is, there He is Body and Blood. In receiving the consecrated host we receive His Body and Blood. He is whole and

entire both in the Host and in the Chalice. By the priest's communion the Holy Sacrifice is completed. As he receives the host he says: "May the Body of Our Lord Jesus Christ preserve my soul unto life everlasting. Amen." Afterwards taking the chalice in his hands he prays: "The Blood of Our Lord Jesus Christ preserve my soul unto life everlasting. Amen." Reverently he receives the precious Blood that was shed for our redemption, and silently communes with his Saviour.

The communion is the last principal part of the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. By communion the Eucharistic Sacrifice attains its perfection as a sacrifice, since the celebrant partakes of the sacrificial Body and sacrificial Blood which have been previously offered by him in sacrifice. It is in reference to this that the apostle says: "The chalice of benediction, which we bless, is it not the communion of the Blood of Christ? And the bread, which we break, is it not the partaking of the Body of the Lord?" (I Cor. x. 16.) The communion, therefore, constitutes, although not an essential, yet an integral part of the Eucharistic

Sacrifice. Mass would be incomplete without the communion, which is a sacrificial repast, being the fruit of the Sacrifice of the Altar.

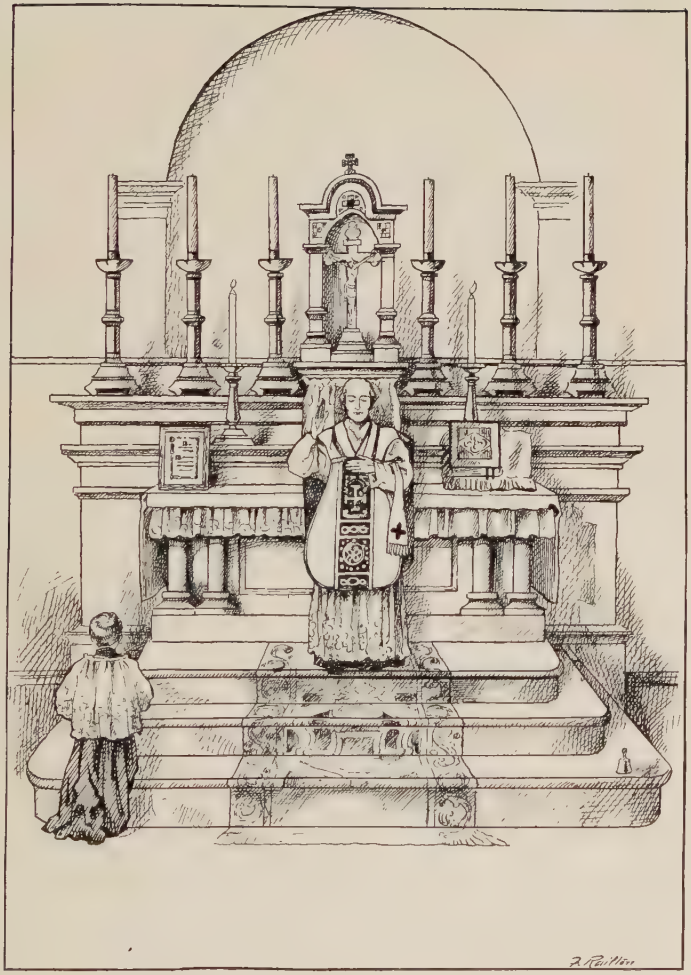
The Eucharist is both a sacrifice and a sacrament, producing different effects of grace, so that the graces of the sacrifice are to be distinguished from those of communion. By the sacrifice we worship and placate God; by communion we receive Jesus Christ sacramentally. Other sacraments impart grace; the Eucharist is the Author of grace. By worthy reception of the Eucharist we begin in this life that mystical union with God which will terminate in the glorious and everlasting companionship with Him hereafter.

What follows the communion of the Mass is a gradual finale of the tragedy of the Cross. Directly after the communion the priest receives wine and water for the purification of the chalice and also of his fingers which have been in contact with the consecrated species. During this purification he prays as follows: "May Thy Body, O Lord, which I have received, and Thy Blood which I have drunk, cleave to my breast; and grant that no stain of sin may remain in me,

who have been refreshed with pure and holy sacraments. Who livest and reignest with God the Father in unity with the Holy Ghost, God, world without end. Amen." While the priest is purifying and covering the chalice we may contemplate the disciples of Jesus preparing His Body for burial, after it was taken down from the Cross.

Having arranged and covered the chalice the celebrant proceeds to the epistle side of the altar, that is to his right, and reads the post-communion prayer, after which he returns to the middle of the altar and, before giving the blessing, prays: "O Holy Trinity, let the homage of my service be pleasing to Thee; and grant that the sacrifice which I, unworthy, have offered up in the sight of Thy Majesty, may be acceptable to Thee, and through Thy mercy be a propitiation for me, and all those for whom I have offered it. Through Christ Our Lord. Amen."

Having made this invocation he kisses the altar and turning towards the people blesses them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost. He then proceeds to his



AT THE LAST BLESSING

left and says the last gospel, after which the Mass is ended.

The blessing which the priest invokes on the faithful just before the last gospel, brings to our mind the blessing which Christ pronounced upon His disciples and followers on Mt. Olivet as He ascended into heaven: "And lifting up His hands, He blessed them. And it came to pass, whilst He blessed them, He departed from them, and was carried up to heaven." (Lk. xxiv. 50-51.) The Mass, which begins at the foot of the altar, recalling Christ's agony in the Garden of Gethsemane, ends with the last gospel, just before which the blessing is pronounced which calls to mind the glorious ascension of Our Lord into heaven after His victory over death and the grave.

Christ speaking to His disheartened disciples on the way to Emmaus told them that it was necessary for Him to undergo His passion in order to enter into His glory: "O foolish, and slow of heart to believe in all things which the prophets have spoken. Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and so to enter into His

glory?" (Lk. xxiv. 25, 26.) The last blessing, therefore, reminds the faithful that where Christ is in glory there they, too, will be if in their own way of the cross they go forward in the true Christian spirit of patience and hope.

Christ is our Model and Leader. He chose the Cross because He knew that His followers would have a cross to bear. Whether we wish it or not we shall have our way of the cross sooner or later, in one way or another. If we carry it in the spirit of Christ it will raise us up to where He is in glory.

The Mass, therefore, besides being the most acceptable sacrifice that can be offered to Almighty God, and a vivid reminder of Christ's passion, is also a powerful incentive to face the battle of life as a true soldier of Christ. If we suffer with Him we shall reign with Him. "To him that shall overcome, I shall give to sit with Me in My throne." (Apoc. iii. 21.) By the Mass, consequently, we are taught that suffering instead of being a dead weight may be converted into gold for the kingdom of heaven.

The Mass teaches us that we have it in our

power by a worthy following of Christ to become the children of God: "But they that shall be accounted worthy of that world . . . can die no more, for they are equal to the angels, and are the children of God, being the children of the Resurrection." (Lk. xx. 35, 36.) Hence the Mass not only shows the death of the Lord and renews the oblation of Calvary, as Christ ordained that it should, but also proclaims his victory over the forces of evil, and His assurance of victory to all those who, with trust in Him, fight the good fight of faith.

But, above all, the Mass affords us the means of offering to God adoration truly worthy of Him. This is why it is a privilege as well as a duty to assist at Mass. It is an honor to be allowed to participate in an act which gives honor to God. But besides honoring God, the devout attendance at Mass draws down upon us the abundant grace of God.

If besides assisting at the Holy Sacrifice we also partake of the Sacrificial Offering, the Mass will indeed be rich in God's blessing upon us. Holy Communion enables us to be more inti-

mately associated with the act of worship paid to God. It unites us more closely with the priest at the altar, and brings into our souls more abundantly the choicest fruits of the Holy Sacrifice.

It will thus be seen that the Mass is the sublimest act of public worship of the Church established by Christ. The attitude of the Catholic towards Mass is an index to his Catholicity. Fidelity to Mass, especially if attended in the right manner, is a marvelous aid to right Christian living and a pledge of companionship with God in that abode which He has prepared for them that love Him.

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